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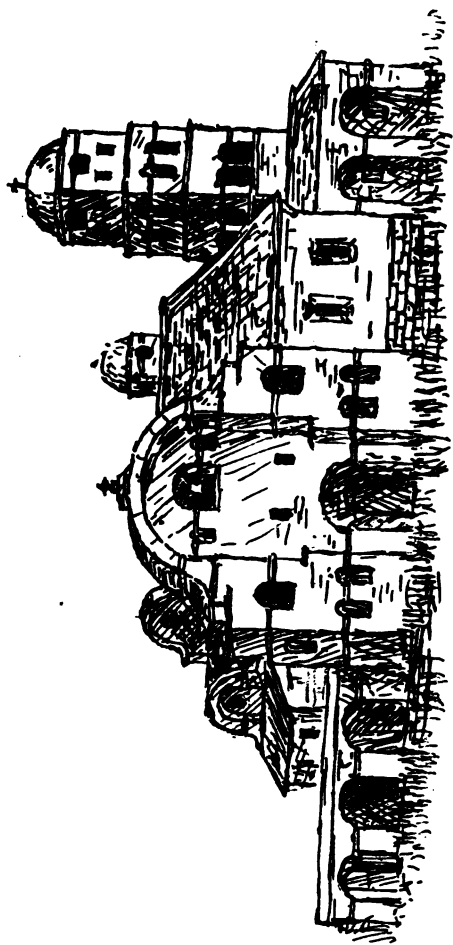
*or*

*A Christian Optimist*









OLD CALIFORNIA MISSION (RESTORED)

# A Business Venture In Los Angeles

or

## A Christian Optimist

BY

Z. Z.

Illustrated by

PHILIP HUBERT FROHMAN

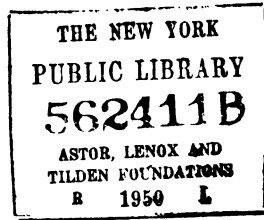


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# A Business Venture in Los Angeles;

OR,

## A CHRISTIAN OPTIMIST.

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### CHAPTER I.

"I really can not see what we are to do," remarked Gladys Grayston, as she helped her sister to clear away the few dishes they had used for their luncheon. "I have not the slightest idea of what is to become of us."

She spoke in her usual calm, dignified manner, as though she might have been commenting upon the state of the weather.

"Neither have I," assented Edna, in a doleful tone, contrasting strangely with her rosy, smiling countenance.

Then, their work ended, both seated themselves—Gladys with an unopened book in hand, Edna near the window, out of which she glanced idly from time to time.

The sisters were living in a room on the first floor of a modest-looking two-story house in the city of Los Angeles. Upon a small plot directly in front of their window, partially hiding the street from view, was a palm tree, while opposite it, upon a similar grass plot, stood an evergreen whose spreading branches

nearly reached the ground. About a dozen Calla lilies reared their snowy heads in a narrow bed, where a few other plants were struggling against the combined influences of too much shade and too little water. The day was an ideal one in early November.

"If only," continued Gladys, musingly, "we had been brought up to do any one thing thoroughly—in fact, if we had had the progressive style of training of the present day! I used to think how lovely it was for a woman to have an all-around sort of education; to combine in one—to a moderate degree, of course—author, artist, musician, linguist, etc., together with all the grace and elegance necessary to adorn the whole. But now—"

"Behold the finished result!" Edna laughingly interrupted, as she pointed to her sister.

"Yes," Gladys coolly replied; "Eudora and I are pretty fair specimens of that style of training—as far as it went! You were not old enough to progress very—"

"And never would, if I lived to the age of Methuselah," again interrupted Edna.

"You are probably right, Ducksie; I really think you never would. But, behold the result, as you say. We are absolutely useless, as far as anything practical is concerned. Matters might have been different if our dear mother had lived to direct our education; but Mademoiselle was hardly capable of developing the qualities necessary for battling against the storms of life. We are admirably adapted for basking in the sunshine; the trouble is, the sun is not always shining, as we have been rapidly finding out of late. Of

course if—if everything had gone on smoothly, we should have had no necessity for struggling. As matters are, a more practical training would find us in an entirely different position.”

Tears filled Edna's eyes.

“O, Gladys, it sounds as if you were blaming dear father, and I am sure he did his very best for us. It was not his fault that we are left with only a few hundreds of dollars instead of some hundreds of thousands, as would have been the case if he had not died so suddenly”—sobs choked her voice.

“Of course it was not his fault,” replied Gladys, in the cold tone peculiar to her when annoyed. “No one dreams of accusing him of such a thing, Edna. I do beg of you occasionally to rein in that lively imagination of yours. He had us educated in precisely the manner in which his own sister was educated; and he always considered her a model of all that was admirable in woman.”

“Well, Aunt Julia *is* lovely,” returned Edna, who had already recovered her composure. “Just as sweet and charming as can be.”

“Certainly, Edna. No one disputes that fact. But if, for example, she were suddenly placed in the position we are in, she is not one particle better fitted to make her way through life than we are. By the bye, I wonder whether our letters ever reached them, traveling about, as they do, in such outlandish places. Even allowing for delay, we surely ought to have received an answer by this time. Poor Eudora! What a shock to her! I am glad her year of foreign travel was nearly over before this sorrow came.”



"I wonder," remarked Edna, hesitatingly, "whether she will not return to us when she hears"—she paused.

"No, indeed," said Gladys, more hastily than was her wont in speaking. "I hope not—though of course it would be pleasant to have her. She is happy with Aunt Julia, who will be only too glad to keep her altogether. Their temperaments do not clash, as hers and ours were apt to do at times, though doubtless there was fault on both sides. At any rate, we shall have the comfort of knowing that at least one of us is provided for."

At this moment a cab stopped in front of the door. Edna hastily shifted her position to an unseen one behind the curtain.

"There's a lady getting out," she announced. "A visitor, I suppose, to Mrs. Smith. Why, Gladys, she looks like—it can't be—I really believe, though—yes, it is—why Gladys, it's Eudora herself!"

And the two girls ran into the hall, where the maid was already opening the door to admit a young lady. "Eudora!" "You dear girls!" And as they drew their sister into their room and closed the door, they forgot incompatibility of disposition and everything else disagreeable, as they realized that one of their very own was again beside them, and not only so, but that she had, presumably of her own accord, left a home of luxury to share their life of privation and toil. For a moment there was silence, while tears flowed from all eyes. Each remembered that the last time they were together, the dear father was among them, and had been the very merriest of the little

party who had waved a good-bye to Eudora as the steamer slowly left her moorings. But speedily the tears were dried, and questions and answers succeeded each other with marvelous rapidity. Eudora explained that the letters containing the sad news had not reached them until quite lately—that Aunt Julia had at once decided to come over with her, but that Uncle Bertram had met with an accident, not serious, but which, combined with some business troubles, had made her unwilling to leave him.

“Where did our letters reach you?” inquired Gladys.

“In Vienna. We had been staying for three weeks at a remote village in Switzerland, and, though Uncle Bertram had left orders for our letters to be forwarded, there was some misunderstanding, so that when we returned to Vienna, a whole budget was awaiting us.”

“What a shock it must have been,” said Edna, “to have all the bad news meet you at once.”

“It was, indeed,” replied Eudora, quietly, and it seemed to Gladys and Edna that there was almost indifference in her tone. “But now, girls, tell me exactly how you are situated. How long have you been in this house? I went to your former address, and they directed me here.”

“We came here two weeks ago,” replied Gladys. “Of course we could not stay at an expensive hotel; this is nearly the opposite extreme. You know we left New York two months ago, just after that serious illness of father’s, and we were looking about for a suitable house in which to settle for the winter, when—”

"Yes, I know," interrupted Eudora. "You poor, dear girls! All alone in a strange place, and sudden poverty added to your other troubles! When I read your letters, I just felt as if I must fly to you—though you did not seem to expect that I would come." This was said inquiringly.

"No," said Gladys, in some confusion, as she and Edna glanced at each other, "we thought as you were so comfortable with Aunt Julia, there was no use in making three unhappy instead of two, and—"

"And you also felt," interrupted Eudora, smilingly, "that I would not be much of a comfort—in fact, quite the contrary. Now, honestly, girls, didn't you? Never mind answering—I don't blame you at all. But I mean you to find out how mistaken you were, and to acknowledge before long that three heads are a great deal better than two."

They were already feeling it. Certainly this Eudora was very different from the proud, fault-finding girl of two years ago. It was not so much that her countenance was changed—was brighter, gentler, calmer than of yore—but there was a something that could be felt; something which made her sisters feel instinctively that a comforter had indeed come to them; that they were the stronger, the happier for her coming. So it was with entire truth that Gladys answered for both:

"We are delighted to have you with us again, dear Eudora!"

"Now, before we enter into any discussion as to future ways and means," said Eudora, "tell me how you are situated at present. Is this your only room?"

"Yes," replied Gladys," and I was just considering where we should put you to sleep. O, I know. Mrs. Smith has a cot-bed, and I dare say she will lend it to us for the present. Edna, suppose you go and see about it?"

And shortly Edna returned, reporting a favorable answer.

"So that is settled," said Eudora. "Now, girls, another important question comes up. When do you have dinner? For I am really hungry, as it must be about six hours since I have had anything to eat."

"I will get you some luncheon directly," said Gladys. "But you must put up with rather awkward accommodations, Eudora. We get our meals ourselves here in our room—on that little oil-stove, which serves as heater also. Now here"—going to a corner cupboard in front of which a curtain was hung—"here are bread and butter, cold tongue, and jelly. That will take the edge off your appetite, and towards evening we shall get something for dinner from the restaurant, of which there are any number in this place."

And Gladys and Edna looked somewhat anxiously at their sister, to note the effect of these words, but Eudora did not seem shocked, nor even surprised.

"That is nothing new to me," she said, lightly, "there are so many such places abroad in the towns where students congregate. They usually hire rooms and buy provisions ready cooked to take home with them. A number of them had rooms close to our hotel, and Aunt Julia someway became acquainted with them, and invited them often over of evenings to our sitting-

room, where she had refreshments for them—and they did so enjoy it, as I am now about to do.”

So saying, she seated herself at the small table, and while she is engaged in the discussion of what lay thereon, let us take a glance at the outward appearance of the three girls.



## CHAPTER II.

Gladys was twenty-six years old. She was tall, with dark eyes and hair, a clear pale complexion, good features, and with a general air of refinement and grace which justified strangers in pronouncing her a most interesting-looking girl. Eudora was twenty-three, also tall and slender, with fair complexion, brown hair and gray eyes; as refined in appearance as her sister, with more actual claim to beauty, though hardly what is usually termed a "beauty." Edna was eighteen, short, stout, rosy, with blue eyes and golden hair; so much the opposite of her sisters that strangers were surprised to hear of the relationship. "If I only had any style like you or Eudora," she would sometimes ruefully exclaim, "it would be something of a compensation for my dumpiness, greenish blue eyes and no complexion to speak of." "But you have a clear, healthy color," Gladys would sometimes say. "And what about your lovely hair?" "O, that is rather an aggravation. It's really provoking, when people who have only seen my back try to get a look at my face, and then seem disappointed at the discordance between the two." "Nonsense, Edna," Gladys would say laughingly. "What an imagination you have!" But there was a good deal of truth in it, after all. Their characters will develop as the story progresses.

"Where are your trunks, Eudora?" asked Edna as she cleared away the remains of her sister's repast.

"They will be here presently, I presume. But, girls, what exquisite flowers in those beautiful grounds opposite us! Why, there are white roses actually climbing clear to the peak of that Gothic roof! And what a variety of other kinds of roses all about! And what are those tall bushes of red flowers over there?"

"Some are fuchsias," replied Gladys, "and some geraniums. They grow to nearly trees here. Yes, they are very beautiful, though we can hardly see them for this mass of shade just in front of our windows. But perhaps it is just as well, for they do make this poor little yard look so mean by contrast."

"I should not have thought of the matter in that way at all," said Eudora. "They are only a part of our Father's great garden, and we have as much right to enjoy looking at them as those who call them their very own. But now I shall take this comfortable rocking-chair, as I am supposed to be tired, and I will tell you about my journey, and about Aunt Julia, and everything you want to know; and then you shall tell me all I want to know."

For two hours or more a lively conversation ensued—sometimes gay, oftener serious, sometimes even tearful. Finally a long pause; then Eudora broke the silence. "And now, girls, the question comes up, What are we going to do for our future support? One thousand dollars in bank, about sixty you say you have on hand, and one hundred which Uncle Bertram gave me when I was leaving, are not going to carry us very far, and the sooner we do something to save our drawing further on our little stock the better."

"Of course," said Gladys, "that is just what we were speaking about when you arrived. Our Boston cousins have invited us to spend a year with them, and we have had several offers from old friends in New York to make them visits of indefinite length, but Edna and I decided that we did not wish to accept any of these offers; perhaps you feel differently."

"No, indeed," replied Eudora, "I think you are quite right. Since sooner or later we must make our own living, the quicker we begin the better. It is easier, too, to launch out independently in a strange place than where we would be hampered by former circumstances and by the conflicting views of friends. Have you thought of anything special, Gladys?"

"O, of course I thought of teaching, as the most respectable thing for girls in our position. But the fact is, Eudora, *I don't know how*. Mademoiselle was very good in certain ways, and gave us an admirable kind of finish—so said our friends. But this is a practical age, and people have to understand things thoroughly or keep in the background. Arithmetic, for example. I never liked it, nor you either, Eudora, and you remember how easily Mademoiselle let us off when we pleaded a headache; in fact, I used to detect a gleam of satisfaction in her eyes on such occasions, and I am convinced now that she did not know much about it herself."

"Yes," added Edna, "Once I asked her to explain a problem, and she made some excuse to go upstairs. I had to go to her room a few minutes after to give her a message, and there was a Key to Arithme-



tic lying open on her bed. She had forgotten to hide it."

All laughed, and then Eudora said, "But she was very good in most things, and of course she had no idea that we should ever have occasion to put our learning to practical account. However, we may as well admit that as teachers we should be failures. What then?"

"I have no idea," said Gladys. "But just think, Eudora! Mr. Crescent, father's old friend, who spends his winters in Los Angeles—at least he has lately—came the other day to propose that we should open a little book-store! He said there was a stock for sale at a very low price, and that it was a chance in a hundred. Just think, Eudora! The idea of *us* keeping store!"

"Why not?" asked her sister, quietly. "I knew there must be *something* waiting for us *somewhere*, and probably this is the very thing."

"Eudora!" burst forth simultaneously from Gladys and Edna, the latter adding: "You surely don't mean it!"

"Why not, girls? Since we must make our living, and can't teach, and nothing else offers itself, I don't see why keeping store would not do as well as other things. In this age, women can do almost anything respectable and not lose caste, unless with those whose good opinion is not worth having. Besides, girls, I have been learning of late that when one is in need of something, and watching for that something to turn up, it is wise to accept, or at least to consider carefully, the first thing that presents itself, whether it be precisely

to one's taste or not. But tell me more about this business, Gladys."

"I can't, indeed. I did not ask for particulars, as I had not the remotest idea of considering the matter seriously. However, if you care to know the details, Mr. Crescent is to be here this evening. He has kindly taken charge of our business affairs since father died—I might say of us, too. He is an elderly widower, with a married daughter living in New York; a most agreeable, kind-hearted man; indeed, I do not know what we should have done without him."

"Somebody else would have come to the rescue," said Eudora, smilingly.

"Now, Eudora," said Edna, decidedly, "I just want you to tell us what *is* the matter. You are the most changed girl I ever saw. Here we were expecting you to grumble at everything, to be shocked at this, that and the other, and—and—"

"And in fact, to make myself a general nuisance, isn't that what you mean, Edna? Well, girls, I will tell you all about it in a few words. About a year ago, we went to board for several weeks in a family of practical Christian people. There, by degrees, everything changed for me. Like yourself, Gladys, I had been a church member for several years, and I considered myself as good as the average, to say the least—better, probably, than many. There I learned that to be a Christian really, is to live the Christ life—to take His teachings literally, and to act them out from day to day—to believe that He dwells within us through His spirit as He promised, and that this indwelling makes all things possible for us, and to

know that all things are working for our good. Not to look back remorsefully on the past, or forebodingly on the future, but to do the best we can this very day, this very minute, trusting the Father for everything—health, strength, wisdom, love, peace, joy, prosperity—*everything* good, and giving Him thanks always, for all things, in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And O, girls, what a happy, care-free life it is! But I am only learning it, you know, and we shall learn it together, and be happier than we ever were in all our lives before!"

Gladys and Edna were silent ; then the conversation drifted into other channels.



## CHAPTER III.

Mr. Crescent called in the evening, according to agreement. Somewhat to Eudora's surprise, he was not an old-looking man, as she had surmised would be the case, from Gladys' description. He was gray-haired and somewhat elderly, to be sure, but not more so than her own father had been, and no one thought of calling him old. He proved himself a most interesting talker, and quite as delightful as the girls had represented. Soon all the details of the book-store plan were laid before Eudora. Mr. Crescent explained that the former owner had lately died, and that his young widow, wishing to return to her parents in the East, had decided to sell the stock at about one-half its value. The lease of the store had just expired, and could not be renewed on the same easy terms. It was best so, Mr. Crescent said, as the building was in the business part of the city, and would therefore not be so agreeable for young ladies. But he had noticed within a couple of blocks from their present residence, a small store for rent, which he thought might be just the thing. It was the only store in the immediate neighborhood and though, as a usual thing, that was not an advantage, it might be different in the present case.

"You see," he continued, "the stock consists largely of second-hand school-books. As the scholars in the public schools change grades, they need different books, and are often unable or unwilling to buy new

ones out and out. So they dispose of their old ones, allowing the money to go towards their new books, or towards the second-hand ones which may happen to be in stock."

"O," exclaimed Gladys, "I thought there was great danger of infection in handling books coming from the public schools. There is so much scarlet fever and other diseases among children, you know."

"That is true, Miss Gladys; but there is a method of fumigation to which each book is subjected when received. I inquired particularly into this matter, and found that the process was a simple and speedy one. If you should decide on closing with this offer, I shall be happy to initiate you into the mystery, and likewise render you whatever other assistance may be needed."

"You are very kind, indeed," said Eudora. "Then suppose we go to-morrow morning, look at the store in question, and come to a decision of one kind or other. What do you think, girls?"

"I don't like it at all," said Gladys. "But as you say something must be done, and I suppose it is better to put our pride into our pockets than to starve or beg."

"And," said Edna, "it seems so much pleasanter since we have talked it over this way. I always had a business head, you know, and I could keep the books and manage the financial matters. I really think it would be fun!"

Next morning, all three started out on an investigating tour. The store was situated on the corner of one of the best residence streets in the city. Next door and all about it were handsome houses and

grounds; it looked strange, indeed, to see this little, shabby, one-story frame structure, put up in the flimsy style peculiar to many California buildings, in the midst of such stately associates.

"Isn't it a disgraceful looking affair?" said Gladys, as they stood surveying the exterior before entering. "A dab of green paint, a dab of blue and yellow and purple wherever the brush happened to light. Why, it's just awful!"

"O no," said Eudora, cheerfully, "half a day's work by a painter will make it all right. We must look at it as it may be, not as it is. Now for the inside."

The door opened upon a fairly good-sized room, with canvas unplastered walls, and absolutely bare.

"Why, there is no counter, and no shelves," said Edna.

"Where are we expected to keep the books?"

"Don't you remember Mr. Crescent saying," replied Eudora, "that the fixtures go with the stock, and that a carpenter could soon get everything ready?"

"So he did, but I had forgotten. Do let us look at the other rooms. O, girls! here's a cute little room! and here's still another! and actually here's a kind of a kitchen at the back, with—yes, really, and truly, a stove! Tiny, to be sure, and rusty as can be, but I suppose there must be something that will make it bright again. Won't it be fun?"

"Yes, indeed," said Eudora. "We can really go to housekeeping here."

"Housekeeping!" exclaimed Gladys. "What has come over you, Eudora? Where are the dining-room

and sitting-room, to say nothing of at least two bedrooms? Why, we never could manage in the world."

"I don't see why we couldn't," remarked Edna, "since we have been concentrating everything of late into *one* room."

"Of course, that was temporary. I never expected to put up with that for any length of time, and—"

"Good morning, young ladies," said a cheerful voice, and Mr. Crescent walked in. "I expected to find you here about this time, and came over to see what is your opinion of this princely mansion."

"Eudora is ecstatic," said Gladys, dryly. "I suppose that settles the matter."

"No, indeed, Gladys. It shall be just as you and Edna say. I was only, Mr. Crescent, trying to look at what might be, rather than what is. It's a way I have been learning of late," Eudora added, laughingly.

"A very delightful way, I am sure, Miss Eudora," said Mr. Crescent, gallantly. "I wish I could learn it myself. But now, young ladies, I have just been interviewing the young widow. She is extremely anxious to get away before the first of the month, and proposes to take off fifty dollars from her first offer, in case the bargain is at once concluded, and the cash paid down. It is, as I have told you, a very great bargain; and if you should conclude upon accepting it, and should hereafter not make it a success, I think you would have no difficulty in disposing of the stock for at least as much as you gave for it—probably more."

"Well," said Gladys, "as I seem to be the only ob-

stacle in the way, I hereby withdraw my objections, and leave you all free to do as you think best."

A little more conversation, and the matter was decided, Mr. Crescent being empowered to manage the entire business.

"By the bye," he said, as they were about to separate, "what do you intend doing with those two rooms—three rooms, I might say?"

"Live in them, Eudora and Edna say," replied Gladys.

"O well, now," Mr. Crescent remonstrated, "I am really afraid you could not be comfortable. They are very small, you know, and—well, I hardly think it would answer. In my humble opinion, you would do better to remain where you are—for the present, at least."

"Our rent is paid for the next three weeks," said Gladys. "We can take that time to consider, and see whether we are likely to make a success of the business or not."

This was on Saturday. The following week was a busy one. Their kind friend attended to all the financial and out-door arrangements—and in a few days the place wore a totally different aspect. A coat of gray paint made a wonderful change in the outside, while a carpenter, a woman for scrubbing, and the girls' own ingenuity, soon transformed the interior. Now that the matter was settled, Gladys threw herself into it as heartily as the others, and all worked together in harmony. A week saw everything completed, and on Saturday the stock was moved in.

"This is the fun," said Edna, as case after case was



landed upon the floor, now covered with a neat oil-cloth.

"Tell me to-night if it's fun," said Mr. Crescent, smilingly opening a box. "Now, young ladies, you shall decide upon which side you wish these new books to go, and on which the second-hand ones."

"New books!" all exclaimed. "We did not know there *were* any new ones!"

"O yes, indeed! Otherwise the bargain would have been anything but a good one. Here are about six hundred volumes, valued at from twenty-five cents up to two or three dollars; they are on every variety of subjects, from Mother Goose to Darwin."

"O, how lovely!" exclaimed Edna, and the others agreed with her. "This is ever so much better than we expected."

"I think," said Gladys, "that they ought to go on those shelves behind the counter, as they will make more of a show there. But what are these drawers for under the counter?"

"For the stationery, and odds and ends of various descriptions," replied Mr. Crescent.

"Why, that is something more," exclaimed Edna; "We never thought of stationery, I am sure."

"I suppose," said Eudora, "all those second-hand books will go on those three long shelves. Now, girls, suppose we divide the work. Gladys will arrange the new books, I the old ones, and you, Edna, can put away the stationery and miscellaneous articles."

"Just the part I like," said Edna; and soon all the cases were opened and each one busy at her appointed

work, Mr. Crescent constituting himself general adviser and helper.

"What lots of note paper and envelopes," exclaimed Edna, as she dived into the contents of one large packing case. "Some are in boxes, some not. Here's a box of pocket-books of all sorts and sizes; and here are a number of pictures—several framed—and boxes and boxes of pens and pencils, and all sorts of knickknacks. Why, it's perfectly lovely! And I never thought of anything but a lot of musty old books!"

"The glass case on the counter is for the purpose of holding as many of those small articles as you choose to put into it," said Mr. Crescent. "With your artistic tastes, you can make it very attractive. Now, here are a number of magazines. The widow told me that she took several every month. For some she had regular subscribers—I have their names; the remainder are sold, if possible. Those unsold are returned to the publisher and a new supply sent. Of course, the supply is limited as nearly as possible to the demand. Several daily newspapers are also sent you; those not disposed of are returned to the office."

"I should hardly suppose it would pay to sell newspapers," said Eudora.

"In one way it does not, Miss Eudora; but often a passer-by will drop in and buy a paper which he sees displayed, and after awhile may become a regular customer. The widow had a number of such on her list. You will have fewer, on account of the situation; but it is best to neglect nothing which may prove of ultimate advantage."

"You are becoming quite a business man yourself, Mr. Crescent," said Gladys, laughingly.

"Yes, indeed, Miss Gladys, and you can not imagine what an interest it is to me. I had little to think of in my hotel but myself and my ailments, and now I am too busy to think of either, and am feeling like a new man."

"You are kind enough to put it in that way," said Gladys, in her pretty, graceful manner. "But, unquestionably, the benefit is chiefly on our side. We could never have managed without your assistance."

At this moment, a wagon stopped at the door, and a man brought in a table and six chairs, which Mr. Crescent directed him to carry into the room adjoining the store.

"Now, young ladies," said their friend, when the man had gone, "I knew this business would be likely to occupy us for the entire day, and I did not propose to fast all that time. So I took the liberty of ordering a luncheon to be sent here at noon, and the chairs and table you will kindly allow to remain until I go to housekeeping, which perhaps may be the case one of these days. Yes, I am in earnest," as they all laughed—"my daughter is anxious to come to California on account of her youngest son's health, and her husband is trying to arrange his business to that end. It is possible they may be here before the beginning of another year, in which case, I intend renting or buying a house, and having them live with me."

"How nice!" exclaimed Edna. "Are there any girls in the family, Mr. Crescent?"

"Only one, Miss Edna, and she is but six years of age. A very sweet little girl, and a great pet of her grandpa, I assure you."

Shortly a waiter appeared bearing a large silver salver upon which was a delicious luncheon, and soon the four were seated around the table with a thorough enjoyment of the situation.

"How delightful!" exclaimed Edna, with a sigh of content, as she finally laid down her knife and fork, and surveyed the others. "I had almost forgotten there was such a thing as comfort in a meal. Actually, I haven't had to jump up once for anything, and considering that such has been the case of late from five to ten times during every repast, I am prepared to enjoy this contrast."

"It has not seemed to hurt you," said Eudora, as she smilingly surveyed the plump form and rosy cheeks. "You might become too stout, Edna, if you had not plenty of exercise."

"O, of course, I expected *you* to see some good in it," retorted Edna. "I wonder if there is anything you don't see good in?"

"I hope not, little sister. The friends I told you about taught me to say when I felt in a grumbling mood, 'I have faith in God as the one and only power working in and through my life.' Looking for the good, we find only the good, and begin gradually to realize that *all* things work together for our good."

It was easy for Eudora to say these things; they came to her as naturally as did other topics. To Gladys, it would have been almost impossible to give

expression to any of her deeper feelings, and she could not understand her sister.

"Well, now, Miss Eudora," said Mr. Crescent, "that is very sensible. Here I have been a church member for—well, forty years at least, and I've grumbled considerably when things went wrong, as I called it. However, it's never too late to learn, and I'll see if I can't go on another tack for the future. But I have a piece of good news for you, young ladies. I have just discovered that former intimate friends of mine from New York are living in this house next you. The family consists of the father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Warringsford, one son, a widower, and his two children, a girl of twelve and a boy of six. Mrs. Warringsford intends calling on you early in the week, and I assure you the acquaintance will be of advantage to you in many ways. They are people well worth knowing, aside from other considerations."

"We shall be happy to meet them," said Eudora, as Gladys was silent. Then all set to work again.

That night, as the girls lay down early to rest, tired out with their unusual exertion, Edna said, after a long silence:

"Eudora, what were you murmuring to yourself just now? Are you talking in your sleep?"

"Only saying what I call my song, Edna. I repeat it every night, and sometimes now I forget I am not alone, and say it out loud."

"What is it?" asked Edna, regardless of the nudges Gladys freely administered.

But there was no hesitation in the calm reply:

" 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all *this* day of my life.' "

"And what of the disagreeablenesses, and vexations, and provokingness of things in general that sometimes seem to make up a large part of one's day?" asked Edna.

"Well, they are part and parcel of that very goodness and mercy, and among the all things working together for our good."

"O well," said Edna, "it's very nice, of course, to feel that way, but when unpleasant things come to me, they just seem twice as big as the pleasant things, and I think of them the last thing at night and the first in the morning."

"So used I to do, little sister, as you may possibly both remember. But this was one of the lessons taught me by those friends: To hold the mercy and goodness so close to my eyes that vexations and annoyances would be completely hidden from view. They taught me it was possible so to *dis*-use my fault-seeing eyes that, like the fish who, from living in a cavern and having therefore no use for their eyes, become entirely blind, I might gradually lose their sight. And I don't despair," she said, laughingly, "that such will eventually become the case, for they are much dimmer than of yore!"

"Girls, do stop talking, and go to sleep," said Gladys, crossly. Nevertheless, she lay awake pondering the matter long after her sisters had obeyed both commands.

## CHAPTER IV.

Monday morning came. Eudora and Edna were early at their "place of business," as Edna laughingly called it, while Gladys remained behind to set matters to rights, and to prepare their noonday lunch, which she was to carry to the store. There were no shutters to take down, none having ever been put up, but the window was to be arranged in the most attractive manner, a small stand placed near the door, upon which the morning papers were to be displayed with their most glaring head-lines visible, and some other matters regulated. Then the girls sat down to await customers.

Edna was soon deep in a book, and Eudora engaged in writing a letter to her dear Aunt Julia, "for I don't expect a single soul," said Edna, "in this out-of-the-way-place," and yet she would have been extremely disappointed had such been the case.

Half an hour passed. It was eight o'clock, and both girls, absorbed in their occupations, had well-nigh forgotten that they were no longer ladies of leisure, but poor girls working for their living.

Suddenly the door opened, and a little figure entered. A boy, about eight years of age, barefooted, with patched clothes, and a little, thin face down which the tears had streaked a channel.

"What is it, little boy?" asked Eudora, kindly, as he stood just within the door looking alternately at her and Edna. "Is anything the matter?"

Tears again seemed imminent.

"Teacher said I must have a pencil—an' I ain't got no money"—a sob.

"Won't your mother give you a penny?" asked Eudora.

"She did—an' she'll lick me when I git home."

"Did you lose it?" inquired Edna.

"Didn't neither! I—I—looked in the baker's window, an' I seen some rolls—with sugar on 'em—an' I was hungry—an' I buyed one—with the penny—an' she'll lick me when I git home." Another sob, louder than the others.

"Were you very hungry?" asked Edna, coming forward to interview their first customer.

"Guess I was. Didn't have no supper, an' only bread, so big"—extending two little fingers—"for breakfast—an' I'm hungry now—that roll was nothin'—made me hungrier."

"Wait," said Edna, impulsively, as she went into the adjoining room. She had brought part of their lunch herself, to leave less for Gladys to carry, and now opening the parcel she took out several slices of bread and butter and a piece of cheese.

"Here," she said, as she handed them to the delighted child, "eat this and you won't be hungry any longer."

He needed no urging, but seating himself on the floor in the corner began speedily to devour the provisions, eyeing his benefactress from time to time, as a hungry dog devouring his bone eyes his master. Edna resumed her book and Eudora her writing until the repast should be over. Then the small boy



arose slowly, with the look of contentment dying out of his face as he remembered the lost penny. But Eudora speedily restored the sunshine, as she held in front of him a gaudy, gilded slate-pencil.

"Here," she said, pleasantly, "You can have the pencil without any money this time. But another time, when your mother gives you a penny to buy something with, you won't spend it for anything else, will you?"

"No'm," as he clutched the pencil; then without another word he ran out, banging the door behind him. The girls looked at each other and Edna laughed.

"Our first customer!" she said.

"Our first customer!" repeated Eudora, with a soft light in her eyes. "O Edna, how glad I am! It is so lovely to begin our new life by ministering to our Lord."

"Why, Eudora!" Edna looked rather shocked. "That sounds irreverent—or it would, if anybody else said it."

"Why should it, Edna? Has He not said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me?' But as I told you, dear, I am only just learning to take Him at His word, and you and I will learn the lesson together."

Again the door opened and again a boy appeared, a boy as tiny as the other, but there the resemblance ceased. This one was most daintily dressed, with long golden hair flowing around, harmonizing with his refined and picturesque appearance. Approaching the counter with a manly air, he lifted his lovely blue

eyes to the tall young lady standing behind it, with a comical appearance of business.

"Good morning, little man," said Eudora, smiling down upon him. "Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes," said the child, putting his tiny fingers into his tiny pocket. Then suddenly remembering, he pulled them out again, whisked off his cap, and said "Good morning," politely. Holding it in one hand, he put his fingers again into his pockets, and had quite a hunt before he uttered another word. Finally he produced in succession one penny, another, and still another—then a dime. "That's all," he said, with a cute baby lisp, and handed the money gravely up to Eudora.

"But what is it for?" she asked.

"For you," he replied, keeping his large eyes fixed upon her. He had evidently forgotten his errand.

"But I must give you something for it."

His eyes brightened. "Candy!" he suggested, and as both girls laughed, he dropped his eyes with an abashed look.

"But we have no candy, little man. What did your mamma tell you to buy?"

"My mamma is in Heaven; but I'll go and ask grandma."

He trotted out, and they watched him as he ran along the flagged pathway leading through the beautiful grounds of their next door neighbor.

"He's Mrs. Warringsford's little grandson," exclaimed Edna. "Is n't he perfectly lovely!"

The child had evidently been kept in view, for a white-capped and aproned nurse met him near the

door, and then a colloquy ensued. He ran back with beaming eyes, hardly waiting until he was within the door, before stammering out as though fearful of forgetting, "It's for a pencil and—and—two slates—no, for two pencils and one slate—to write on, you know—for me to draw pigs on—with a eye in the middle—I draw them awfully pretty—I'll make you one as soon as you give me the slate. Thank you"—with a funny little bow, as Eudora, after a prolonged search for a double slate, finally handed him the desired articles. "But you tooked a long time finding them, didn't you?"

Then he went away, forgetting his offer of drawing them a pig, but not forgetting to make another bow, and to say good morning, adding, "I'll come again to-morrow."

"Well!" said Edna, "there's a contrast for you! Extremes met this time, didn't they? But what have you to say about our second customer, for I'm sure you have thought of something?"

Eudora had no time to reply, for again the door opened, and a handsome aristocratic-looking, elderly lady entered. Smilingly approaching the counter, she extended her hand to Eudora, who rose to meet her.

"Will you allow me to introduce myself, Miss Grayston?" she said, in a pretty, winning manner. "I am Mrs. Warringsford, your next door neighbor. Mr. Crescent is a very dear friend of ours, and I am most happy to make the acquaintance of any friends of his. Mr. Warringsford and myself had arranged to call on you last Saturday evening, but were detained at home until too late. We shall do ourselves the pleasure of

calling some evening this week, and in the meantime I have run over informally to welcome you as neighbors, and to express the hope that we shall be very good friends before long."

"Thank you, Mrs. Warringsford," replied Eudora. "Mr. Crescent has spoken of you to us, and we have already become acquainted with your little grandson—I believe he is."

"O, Logan," said Mrs. Warringsford. "I hope you will not find him very troublesome. When he likes people, he is apt to become extremely devoted. But send him away whenever you become tired of him."

After some further conversation, Mrs. Warringsford told the girls that she wished to become a subscriber for several of their magazines, having now, as she said, more time for reading than formerly. "And I see you have artists' materials. Then I must let Gabrielle come in and make her own selection. She has quite a taste for drawing and painting, and we wish to encourage her by supplying her with all that is necessary, or that she cares particularly to have."

Then the lady smilingly took her departure.

"What next?" exclaimed Edna, delightedly. "This is charming! If only it would last!"

But there was no "next" for quite a while. Eudora had time to finish her lengthy epistle, then to help Edna in opening some more boxes, besides rearranging the window and counter in more alluring guise.

"It is nearly noon," she said, consulting a small traveling clock which stood on a shelf in full view. "Almost time for Gladys to be here."

At this moment, a troop of school children came down the street, and three or four entered the store noisily, then quieted down a little as they saw the handsome young lady who stood waiting to receive them. She smiled pleasantly, as she said: "Good morning, girls; have you just come from school?"

"Yes," replied the tallest girl, rather pertly. "I want a lead pencil and a writing pad."

Edna, to whom Eudora now gave way, produced a box of pencils, and laid a variety of pads upon the counter. The girl selected a pencil, then turned over the pads, looking at all critically. Finally, she held up one of the largest and best.

"How much is it!" she inquired.

"Fifteen cents."

"O, my! that's too much. It ought only to be a nickel."

"Well, here are some pencil pads for a nickel," said Edna.

"O, but I want one for ink. Say, can't you let me have this for a nickel?"

"O, I suppose so," said Edna, regardless of Eudora's warning look; and the girl, snatching up her purchases without waiting for them to be wrapped up, departed, followed by the others, one lingering behind to ask: "Do you keep candy?"

"Now, Eudora," said Edna, "you look as if you did not approve. I would have supposed that you, above all people, would think it right to be generous."

"But I don't call that generosity, Edna. The little

girl was evidently well able to pay for what she wanted, or, at least, needed; and that five-cent pad was probably just the thing for her to use in school, as I saw a similar one in the hands of two of the other girls. I don't know much about prices, of course; but perhaps those pads may have cost eleven cents at wholesale, in which case we lost six cents by that little transaction."

"O dear!" said Edna, her business faculties asserting themselves. "I never thought of that! It seemed as if we got them for nothing, as we didn't pay for each article separately. I shall certainly be more stingy another time. By the bye, I ought to attend to my book-keeping, or everything will get mixed up. It won't do to be slipshod in that direction."

And Edna was deep in her accounts when Gladys entered with their lunch. As they discussed it around the cozy little table, Gladys was given a full narrative of the morning's adventures. She listened with interest to the account of Mrs. Warrington's call, and of her having subscribed for the magazines.

"I don't like patronage," she said shortly, when the story was ended.

"O, Gladys," said Edna, eagerly, "you would not call it patronage if you knew Mrs. Warrington. She is just as sweet as can be. Isn't she, Eudora?"

"Yes, indeed, Gladys. She is simply kind and friendly, as she would naturally be to friends of a dear friend. You will understand when you meet her. It is a great thing for us to have found, at the very outset of our business career, a friend such as she is likely to prove—and our next-door neighbor, too."

"Oh, well," said Gladys, calmly dismissing the subject, as no more objections occurred to her, "if you and Edna are satisfied, I am sure I am."

But something of a cloud overshadowed for a while the brightness of the morning sunshine.



## CHAPTER V.

While Eudora and Edna washed up the dishes, Gladys took their places in the store. Shortly afterwards a man entered and asked for cigars, much to Gladys' indignation. He evidently noticed her look, for he made a sort of apology, and, perhaps to atone, bought a newspaper. A few minutes after, a stylishly-dressed lady, in passing, glanced at the window, then through it at Gladys, who sat reading behind the counter; paused, hesitated, finally entered and asked for note paper. As she examined the assortment Gladys laid before her, many a furtive glance was directed to the pretty, aristocratic-looking girl who stood with quiet dignity behind the counter.

"You have only lately opened this store, I believe? I noticed its being closed the last time I passed this way."

"Yes," replied Gladys, as she proceeded to make a parcel of the selected paper—very awkwardly, as she felt herself. "We only began business this morning."

She spoke stiffly, as though resenting the inquiry, and the lady, who had really begun to feel an interest in the young girl who looked so out of place in such surroundings, inwardly resolved that she would not enter that store again. At this moment Eudora came in from the adjoining room, and, approaching the counter, greeted the stranger so pleasantly that the latter changed her mind again, and concluded that she



would return. "She is prettier than the other, and just as aristocratic-looking," she thought; "but there is a world-wide difference in their ways and manners."

Then as Gladys was somewhat long in making up the parcel, a few pleasant words passed between the two, and the lady departed in a very different frame of mind from what would have been the case had not Eudora entered.

"You spoke to that person exactly as if she had been an old friend," remarked Gladys, after a few moments silence.

"Well," said Eudora, smilingly, "in one sense she *is* an old friend. We are all brothers and sisters, you know."

"Now, Eudora, that is nonsense. We can't be 'hail-fellow-well-met' with everybody. A certain reserve is proper with strangers, especially alone as we are; it is more dignified."

"My dear Gladys," said Eudora, now speaking seriously, "there is no loss of dignity in kind, friendly manners to all; there is a vast difference between friendliness and familiarity. Politeness somebody calls 'surface Christianity,' but don't you think that those of us who are trying to live the Christ-life ought to have that real kindness of heart which goes beyond mere politeness, and which feels more or less of an interest in all our fellow-creatures?"

"Of course," said Edna, who had come to the door in time to hear the last few words. "It's a great deal better to be sociable. If I should be stiff in my manner, I know I would not sell half as much as I otherwise might and expect to do."

"That is another and an important consideration," said Eudora, "in our position. If we wish our business to be a success, we must make our little store so pleasant that people who come once will want to come again."

"Yes, indeed," said Edna. "Don't you remember, Gladys, how much we disliked going to A's store, because the clerks were so disagreeable, and how at last we stopped going entirely, and went to B's, because the clerks were so pleasant there, and seemed to take a real interest in our purchases, even giving suggestions here and there, when we were puzzled as to a choice? And I remember, Gladys, your saying once that you were sure those other clerks were damaging the business, and that if their employers knew of it, they would soon be given their ticket of leave."

"And I am very sure of one thing," said Gladys, reprovingly, "that I never used slang; and I really wish, Edna, that you would drop it at once. You know how Mademoiselle tried to impress upon you how extremely unlady-like it was—"

But the door opened again, and this time Gladys slipped away, leaving her sisters to manage the new customer. A rough-looking man he was, and Edna shrank towards the back of the store, though rather feeling that the act was one of cowardice. He lounged up to the counter, upon which he threw three coppers.

"I want to-day's Times," he said, in a rude tone.

"They are five cents apiece," replied Eudora, in her usual pleasant manner.

"That's too much," he growled. "Never paid more than three pennies."

"They tried selling them at that price," said Eudora, still pleasantly, "but found they could not make it pay, so returned to the former price."

"Well, it's too much," said the man more roughly than before. "Just hand me over one of them papers, will you?"

By this time Edna had recovered her courage, and came forward prepared to defend her sister. But Eudora needed no help.

"I can not do that," she answered firmly, but with no other change of manner. "That would be unfair to our other customers, who are all obliged to pay five cents a copy. I am sure you must see the reasonableness of this."

Edna scarcely breathed during the pause that followed. The man hesitated, seemed inclined to persist, then gave a gruff laugh and put his hand into his pocket. Taking out two more pennies, he laid them beside the others. "O, well, I guess you're about right," he said more gently, and Eudora politely thanked him as she handed him the paper. Edna drew a long breath of relief as he left the store.

"O, Eudora, how *could* you? Why did n't you give him the paper and let him go?"

"It would not have been right, Edna. Even supposing he had not more than three cents, a newspaper is not a necessity. It would have been cowardly to yield to threats."

"I declare, Eudora, I would not have supposed it

of you. You are always so yielding and willing to give up your own way to everybody."

"Thank you, dear. But in this, I consider it would have been giving into wrong, and therefore allowing wrong to triumph. The amount involved was, of course, very trifling—but the principle was the same, no matter what the amount."

"But just tell me, Eudora, honor bright, weren't you really and truly frightened? for the man looked so threatening, and you used to be so scary, you know."

"I *was* a little frightened, but only for an instant. Then I remembered my talisman, and the fear left me."

"Your talisman?"

"Yes—or rather one of them; for sometimes one, sometimes another, comes to mind. This time it was, 'nothing shall by any means hurt you.'"

"O, but that was a promise made to the twelve apostles in the long-ago musty past, and hasn't anything to say to us."

"Why not! For Jesus, in His discourse to His disciples, told them clearly that His promises were not for them alone, but for all who should hereafter believe on Him. And you and I believe on Him, Edna, so we have a right to claim all those promises. And I am daily learning—and so may you, dear—how to take a firmer grasp of them, and how to give the 'right knock' which opens the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers even here on earth."

Again the door opened, very softly this time, and a Chinaman entered. He was dressed in a flowing robe

of black stuff, partly covering trousers of the same material. Embroidered sandals, and a small black cap, completed the costume. Edna recognized him as the Chinese herb-doctor who lived about three blocks from them, in a rather handsome house, upon the front lawn of which a large sign was displayed, bearing his name, the diseases he professed to heal, and references to the cities in which he had performed cures. His countenance was intelligent, betokening culture. In tolerable English he asked for a bottle of ink, paid for it in silence, gave a quick glance around the store, including its inmates, then departed as quietly as he had entered.

"Isn't he nice?" said Eudora, and then Edna told her all she knew about him.

"When we first came to Los Angeles," she continued, "I used to like going about the streets, reading the queer signs one meets in every direction. Spiritualists, palmists, mind-readers, card-readers, hypnotists, psychologists and ologists of all kinds hang out their signs as freely as regular M. D.'s do in other cities. It used to give me a weird feeling at first, but now I hardly even notice them. As to the Chinese, they are as thick as blackberries—there goes our orange Chinaman, and I must stop him, for there's no one at home, and we should miss him for another week."

So saying, seizing a basket, she ran out, and stopping a passing wagon soon returned laden with fine large oranges.

"How delightful!" exclaimed Eudora. "But were you not extravagant to buy so many?"

"Here are only ten; but some are so large that there seem a good many more. How much do you suppose I gave for the whole?"

"Perhaps half a dollar.

"Just ten cents! And the man says, after awhile, he will give us twelve or fourteen for the same money. They are dearer in the stores, but these are the 'culls' from the packing houses, where they throw aside those of unequal sizes or any having the smallest defect or bruise and sell them for a trifle either in large or small quantities; you see they are of various sizes—look at this immense Navel one. Here is the only one having the slightest blemish that I can see, and it has only a tiny soft spot on this end. Try one, and see how delicious they are."

One more customer—a rather extensive purchaser of letter paper—and business ended for the day, as they had decided that it was best to close the store and return home before dark. Well, no, not exactly ended. There was another customer, though hardly to be regarded as such. A few minutes before five o'clock Mr. Crescent walked in—not at all to the surprise of the girls, who had been rather expecting him at any moment through the day.

"Well, young ladies, I have denied myself the pleasure of calling earlier that you might be quite undisturbed in this your first day of practical business life. How goes it?"

"O, beautifully!" said Eudora, and, "perfectly splendid," said Edna. But Mr. Crescent looked curiously around, as though expecting another voice.

"I am delighted," he said. "You must give me all

the particulars by and bye, but first I must make my purchases. You did not reckon on me for a customer, did you?"

"Indeed, you shall not," said Gladys coming in at the moment. "You know you don't want anything in this little store, and you just shall not buy from pity, do you hear, sir?"

"I beg your ladyship's pardon"—and Mr. Crescent made a low bow—"but I do really want something in this little store; and I am going to have it too. In the first place, I buy a number of magazines every month, and as you have a goodly supply, I may surely be allowed the pleasure of buying them here, in preference to going elsewhere. In the next place, I am badly in need of writing paper, and shall now lay in my supply for the winter. Fortunately, you have a large stock on hand, and can not refuse to accommodate me."

He then proceeded to buy to such an extent that Edna laughingly remarked he would require a wheelbarrow to take his purchases home.

"And, now," he said, "I see you have a lamp on that shelf ready for lighting. Suppose we spend half an hour in going over the accounts Miss Edna has kept. I studied bookkeeping in my youth and may, perhaps, be able to give you some useful hints. I shall then, with your permission, escort you home, as it is already growing dark."

Settling themselves cosily in their little sitting-room, Edna brought in her account book, which Mr. Crescent carefully examined.

"Why, you are quite a bookkeeper, Miss Edna," he

said, at last, "no need of many hints here, and your sales have been remarkably good for a beginning. If you keep on at this rate you can manage very well, provided you have made a tolerably accurate reckoning of what is likely to be your cost for living after your removal to this place."

"We have only made a rough guess at it," said Gladys. "You see we have none of us had much experience in such matters, and so far, when I have made a calculation as to what was likely to be our week's expenses, they have usually exceeded my estimate—often by a good deal. Something unexpected is always turning up. For example, last week an express parcel from the East was sent me for a birthday present from one of my former rich friends. It was an expensive piece of bric-a-brac, really more in my way now than anything else, and I had to pay a dollar and a quarter for the express. Of course, I appreciated my friend's kind intention, and she never thought about the cost, as I should not either a year ago—all the same, it made a hole in our little fund. And I do not think there has been a single week since we have been at housekeeping that there has not been one or more of just such unexpected happenings."

"Then we must leave a margin for the unexpected," said Mr. Crescent, "but you will not always make as much as you have to-day; and, again, there are days when you will make a great deal more—especially when you become better known. The beginning of school sessions will probably be a harvest time; when the children have to change books, or to buy new ones. You are near a large public school, so are likely to



have a good chance in that line. Take it altogether, it seems to me the only satisfactory way is to try the thing for a month; by that time, you ought to have a pretty good idea of whether it is going to work or not. Miss Edna, I compliment you on your good business head."

That evening, Mr. and Mrs. Warringsford made their promised call. In the course of conversation, the discovery was made that Mr. Warringsford had been well acquainted with Mr. Grayston in a business way in New York, and that both families had mutual acquaintances residing there; so that, when they parted at a late hour all felt that they were no longer strangers, but on the road to being very good friends, indeed. Just as they were about to leave, Mrs. Warringsford paused, and said:

"There, now, we were going away without mentioning a project which we hope will meet with your approval. Mr. Crescent has informed us that you propose living in the rooms connected with the store. He cannot become reconciled to the modern idea of young girls taking care of themselves, so far as living alone is concerned; and I may say," she added, laughingly, "Mr. Warringsford and I share his views. You are aware, no doubt, that our grounds reach to the side of your building. Now, if you like, our gardener will make a walk between the two places, leading from our side door to your back door, thus connecting the houses, and putting you, in a manner, under our protection. This will relieve the mind of our mutual friend, and I think be an advantage all around."

Of course there was nothing to say, except to thank

Mr. and Mrs. Warringsford for their kindness, after which they took their departure.

"What were you going to say about that second customer, Eudora?" asked Edna, when the girls had finally retired for the night.

"I hardly remember, dear, but probably I intended saying that as in the first customer we ministered to our Lord, so He ministered to us in the second, and all the rest of the day, even to its very last hour. He has surely returned us double measure for the little we did for Him."

"Then I suppose you will make out that the six cents we lost by that little girl, and the fright that rough man gave us, were all for our advantage too?"

"I certainly believe they were, Edna. I would believe it even if I did not see how it could be, since *all* things work together for good. But it is easy to see how our experience in the little girl's case gave us an opportunity to talk over the matter, and to decide on a course of action which will prevent our making a similar mistake when the amount involved may be more of a loss. In the case of the man, it proved to me how well my talisman worked, and gave me new cause to feel that 'what time I am afraid I will trust in Thee.' So, with a grateful heart, I sing my little song to-night, 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all this day of my life.'"

And, in the lowest whisper, Edna said it too.

## CHAPTER VI.

A few days passed, with more or less success in business. The number of small purchasers increased, as the school children began to find out that such a store existed, while naturally the two larger purchases of the first day were not repeated. Upon the whole, matters were not unsatisfactory, and the girls were quite hopeful. Towards noon of the fourth day, Eudora and Edna were talking over affairs when Gladys entered with their luncheon. She was deathly pale, so utterly unlike herself that Edna exclaimed, "What is the matter, Gladys? Are you sick?"

"No," she replied, shortly; "only—I have a headache. Take your lunch, girls, before it gets cold. I cannot eat anything at present—I had better go home and lie down awhile."

She turned and went away suddenly, as though fearing to be questioned; and the two girls looked at each other uneasily.

"She seemed quite well when we left her this morning," said Edna. "I even noticed how unusually lively she was."

"Yes," said Eudora, musingly; "she is not subject to headaches, either. Edna, I think I had best leave you in charge here, and go back to see if I can do anything for her. I shall not stay long unless it should be necessary; but if I do not return before five, you may then lock up and come home."

It was a surprise to Edna to see Eudora again be-

fore a half-hour had elapsed. There was a grave expression on her usually sunny countenance.

"Gladys would not let me stay with her," she said, trying to speak cheerfully. "She insisted that she would feel better if left quite alone; so I thought it best to do as she requested."

Eudora did not add that she had found Gladys lying across the bed on her face in a paroxysm of subdued weeping, and that to her sister's frightened inquiries she would return no answer, except to beg her to go back and leave her to herself; which, most reluctantly, Eudora had done.

"What can possibly be the matter?" said Edna. "She has been so bright lately—especially since you returned home. She was nearly heart-broken when father died—it was so sudden and unexpected. And you know, though he loved us all, she seemed his special darling. It was strange, too, for she never made a fuss over him, as I did—I used sometimes to think her manner was almost cold to him, though of course she loved him just the same, and it never was her way to gush over anything or anybody. O, dear! I do hope nothing dreadful is the matter! We were just beginning to be so happy again—since you have come, Eudora. I'm sure, though, you can't say now that this is all for the best."

"Yes, but I can, dear, though I certainly cannot see the reason for it. Doubtless she and we, too, need the lesson this is meant to teach us. And in due time the cloud will pass away."

"Well, Eudora, do use some of your talismans to

make it pass as quickly as possible, for it is just dreadful to have anything the matter with Gladys."

"Indeed, I shall, dear. But you have the very same talisman, and must learn to use it also."

And Edna, thinking it very good of Eudora not to reprove her for irreverence, which she had really not intended, felt soothed and comforted.

When they returned home, Gladys was preparing their dinner. She was calm, but extremely pale, with an appearance of exercising strong self-control.

"How is your head, dear?" asked Eudora, as she gently kissed her.

"Better, thank you," replied Gladys shortly, with such evident disinclination for further inquiry, that Eudora said no more, by a look also checking Edna's intended questions. Gladys sat down to table with them, apparently forcing herself to eat. But she soon gave up the attempt.

"Eudora," she said suddenly, "as we intend going so shortly to the store to live, why would it not be as well to go at once?"

"Why, Gladys!" exclaimed Edna, before her sister had time to reply. "We have paid in advance for this room, you know, and our month is not more than half over."

"I know," said Gladys, in the same constrained tone. "But we won't lose anything, since the other rent is likewise paid. We might as well be there as here."

"I don't see why," began Edna, but Eudora interposed.

"I think we might just as well be there," she said,

as though not surprised at the proposal. "In fact, it would be much more convenient to be all together in one place. And we won't be so cramped, either. I intend having a folding-bed in the store for myself; that will leave room enough for you two in that small room."

"Indeed you won't!" exclaimed Edna. "I'll sleep there. But I don't—"

She checked herself as she caught a glance from Eudora, and it suddenly occurred to her that Gladys' eagerness for the change might be in some way connected with this mysterious trouble which had come upon her. So they quietly talked together over ways and means, and retired to rest more composed than might have been expected only a few short hours before.

The following morning, Gladys, who had evidently spent a sleepless night, proposed that she should accompany Eudora to the store, leaving Edna to do what work was to be done, and to prepare and carry them their luncheon—an arrangement not at all to that young lady's taste. Gladys was outwardly composed, but had a restless, unhappy look in her eyes, clearly betokening her mental disturbance. Eudora made no attempt to gain her confidence, feeling that the truest kindness would be to leave her to act as she desired or deemed best.

After opening up the store and making the window appear as attractive as possible, the girls looked around them in the other rooms, trying to decide upon the amount and kind of furniture necessary for decent habitation. Their stock in hand consisted of the

chairs and table sent by Mr. Crescent, and a small kitchen stove, also their clock and one or two trifling articles.

"We must have a kitchen table," said Eudora. "Also two wooden chairs. Also pots, pans, skillets, etc.—extending the list indefinitely as our means will permit. I have been pricing articles within the past few days, and find we can get a wooden table for one dollar; other things in proportion. We need not cover the floor at present, until we see how we are likely to succeed."

"Why, Eudora, how practical you are becoming! It seems more in Edna's line. What a fine little business woman she is! I should not wonder if she were to turn out the most valuable member of the firm—oh!"—

Gladys' momentarily cheerful tones changed suddenly, as an irrepressible exclamation burst from her, and a kind of spasm passed over her countenance. With strong self-control, she recovered herself at once, and proceeded with the conversation as calmly as usual.

"What is your idea in regard to our other apartments?" she asked.

"Well, I think we shall have to take meals in the kitchen, make a bed-room of this, and a sitting-room of the one next the store."

"Why could we not combine sitting and dining-room?" asked Gladys. "The kitchen is so very small."

"Because we should have to carry everything through our bed-room and back again—and it would be both tiresome and inconvenient. There is no use in our

trying to be stylish, Gladys, under present circumstances. Then we are none of us accustomed to housework, and we had better make matters as easy as we can for ourselves, to begin with, at any rate. I have no doubt we shall have perplexities of various kinds, but the way will clear as we proceed."

At that moment the store door opened, three or four school children entered, and for half an hour both girls were kept busy at the counter. Then a lull ensued, and they were about returning to their furnishing calculations, when Mrs. Warringsford entered—"to make a little friendly call," she said. In the course of conversation, Eudora mentioned their intention of removing there immediately.

"Indeed," said Mrs. Warringsford. "Well, now, that is strange, for it was upon this special subject I wished to speak to you at present. This place is too small for three of you to sleep in; it would be extremely inconvenient, to say the least. Now, I have a plan to propose, which I hope you will all approve. We have just lately furnished a room for my little granddaughter—a room for her to sleep in, and to call her own. She has long been asking for it, and last night occupied it for the first time. This morning she complained of loneliness, asking to be allowed to return to the nursery at night. I preferred she should not, but was at first at a loss to know what was best to be done, until this plan occurred to me. Gabrielle's room opens on the spare bed-room—an apartment very seldom used; and it struck me that, as you would be cramped in this place, one of you might possibly like to occupy it. That would be company for Gabrielle,



and would, I am sure, make her quite satisfied with her new quarters. There is a door opposite the walk between our two places; it opens on a stair-case leading directly to those apartments, so that you could run over at any time in the course of the evening without fear, and would, I hope, soon feel yourself quite at home. You can talk it over amongst yourselves, and let me know your decision some time to-day. Now, I wish to mention another matter. In re-furnishing Gabrielle's room, we had to remove most of the former furniture. It was nearly new, but she called it grown-up furniture, and persuaded us to allow her to make her own selection. Now, you will need some things even in this small place, and it does not seem worth your while to buy much, since you are only making an experiment of the business; so, if you will kindly allow me to send over those articles for which I have no present use, and am forced to store away in the barn for want of better quarters, it will be a mutual accommodation, will it not?"

Eudora thanked their kind friend warmly. Gladys also thanked her politely, but somewhat stiffly, and Mrs. Warringsford felt rather chilled by her manner. After some further conversation, and an inspection of the rooms in question, their friend promised that the furniture should be sent over at once, and then took her departure.

"Eudora," said Gladys, abruptly, "I don't like it at all. She is too much of a stranger for us, at least for me, to be willing to put myself under obligation to her. I dislike it very much, indeed."

"And I, dear Gladys," said Eudora, "was just

thanking our kind Heavenly Father for sending us the very things we needed. Besides, she is not really a stranger, Mr. Warringsford having known our dear father, and our being so well known to them through Mr. Crescent. And then—are we not all members of the one great family whose head is Christ, and receiving as we do daily, innumerable favors from Him, should we not be willing to receive them from His brethren and ours, taking care of course to return them, should the opportunity offer ; or to pass them on to others.”

“O, well,” said Gladys, wearily, “I am sure I don’t care anything about it. It is not worth while. *Nothing* is worth while.”

Eudora saw the distressed look returning to her sister’s countenance, and to change her thoughts, went on speaking.

“I remember when we were staying near Paris last year, I once took the cars to go to the *Jardin des Plantes*. When I opened my purse to pay my fare, I found to my dismay, that I had forgotten to replenish it before leaving home. A lady sitting beside me seeing my perplexity, said quietly, ‘*Permettez, Mademoiselle,*’ and paid my fare without giving me time to reply. Of course, I thanked her, then asked her address, so that I could repay her. She declined giving it, saying smilingly that if I felt unwilling to be indebted to a stranger, I could return the favor by paying at some future time, the fare of anyone who needed it. A short time after, I was again in the cars. Seated near me was an old woman, very poorly, though cleanly, dressed. I noticed her taking out of her pocket a colored hand-

kerchief, the corner of which she unknotted, and took from it a small coin. It seemed to me she looked at it reluctantly, as though loth to part from it, and suddenly the thought struck me, here is my chance to repay my debt. I handed in the fare for both. Her delight when she found she had nothing to pay, was really touching. She leaned over in her impetuous French way, kissed my hand, and almost sobbed out, 'Ah, the good young lady! I am on my way to see my sick son, and I would have to walk back—three miles—and I am old and weak—' and so on, her blessings from '*Le bon Dieu*' following me as I left the car. It would have been most embarrassing had others been present, but happily, we were the only passengers. Of course, in one way it was a trifle, but the resulting happiness was great—a happiness which would not have been if I refused that lady's offer. This sounds rather like a sermon though," added Eudora, laughingly, "and I certainly did not intend any such thing. Only, dear Gladys, I wish you could feel with me, that Mrs. Warringsford's kindness is but a part of the 'goodness and mercy' making up this day, and but another proof of the dear Lord's care for us—a care pervading every part of our lives—our joys as well as our sorrows."

Gladys turned away without speaking, and for the next half hour Eudora was busy in the store. Then she returned to Gladys, who, in the meantime, had swept out both rooms, preparatory to receiving the furniture. Shortly after, two men arrived, carrying a carpet, with a message from Mrs. Warringsford that they had orders to put it down. It was large enough

for both rooms, but the girls objected to its being cut. That was the order, the men said, and forthwith proceeded to obey instructions. How pretty it was! Gray, with a crimson rosebud scattered here and there, matching the delicate paper on the walls—far too handsome for such a place, Gladys said. When all was done the men retired, shortly returning bearing a bedstead, then a bureau and washstand, all looking as though quite new. After that they brought in a small sofa, a few chairs, and a round table, which was about all the furniture their tiny sitting-room could contain.

"How fine we are!" said Eudora, when the men had finally left. "Now we must put up a few pictures and some other trifles, to make the place look really home-like. It begins to feel that way to me already. But what will Edna say? How surprised she will be!"

"I should say so," remarked the young lady in question, as she walked in by the back door. "I am so astonished I can hardly speak! How in the world did you get settled so soon, and where did all those things come from?"

Whereupon Eudora gave her sister the desired information, and after the latter had duly examined and admired everything, all three set to work making out a list of household articles necessary for beginning housekeeping. Edna was more practical than her sisters, having a business capacity the others lacked.

"I have been pricing coal as I came along," she said, when they were seated at their early lunch. "It is enormous. So is wood. Most people use either gas or gasoline stoves, or even large coal-oil lamps,

with reflectors; but I suppose we must do the best we can with this crazy old stove. Perhaps it is just as well that it's not any larger."

"But I thought we should not need fire for anything but cooking," said Eudora. "I supposed it was warm all through the winter."

"Well, you were quite wrong, then, as you will probably find out before long. Of course, there is no such cold as in the East; but they say there are many chilly days, especially mornings and evenings, after this month, though some winters are much milder than others. Mr. Crescent says he has a fire in his room every morning from December to April, and sometimes later."

"I should be glad of it," said Edna, "if it were not for the financial consideration, for I enjoy cold weather, and think continual heat would become somewhat monotonous, if not enervating."

"I agree with you," said Gladys. "I shall certainly miss the snow, and even the real sharp, stinging cold."

"O, well, girls," remarked Edna, "it may be colder than you expect. This may be one of the exceptional winters which tourists are constantly encountering. We shall have to manage with this one fire, though, no matter what the weather is. We can wear shawls, or even our fur capes, when in the store on cold days, and these two little rooms will be warmed enough from the kitchen by leaving the doors open between. I have no doubt myself that it will be as jolly as can be—I beg your pardon, Gladys, I mean charming—but, privately, I think 'jolly' is the better word of the two

to express the situation as I have it in my mind. But, girls, where *are* we to squeeze in for the night?"

Then Eudora informed her sister of Mrs. Warringsford's invitation, and of her own intention of accepting it; upon which Edna looked grave, as she hardly liked the idea of being left alone with Gladys. However, she said nothing, and presently she and Gladys set out on their shopping expedition, the latter seeming eager to have something to occupy her thoughts, and evidently desirous of hastening their change of abode.



## CHAPTER VII.

The following day, in they moved, bag and baggage; Mr. Crescent sending an express wagon and personally overseeing the removal of their possessions, consisting chiefly of trunks. Before the others were ready to leave, Gladys was slipping quietly away, when Edna said: "Why, Gladys, are you going without saying good-bye to Mrs. Smith?"

"O, you can say good-bye for me," replied her sister, as she hurried off.

"Another queer thing," thought Edna. "Gladys is always so punctilious in such matters. I do wonder what the trouble is!"

In the afternoon, while they were resting and talking over matters, Gabrielle, with whom they had become acquainted, and Logan ran in. Gabrielle was a tall, graceful girl, twelve years of age. She had fair complexion and golden hair like her brother, but, unlike him, her eyes were dark. They had both the charming ways and manners of thoroughly well-bred children, but Gabrielle had not Logan's sweet, unselfish disposition, nor had he her quickness and delicacy of perception. The little girl had taken quite a fancy to Eudora, and was therefore delighted to hear of the proposed plan for the night.

"Where do you attend school, Gabrielle?" inquired Gladys.

"At Miss B——'s, not very far from here. It's a nice school. There are only twelve girls; no boys."

"No, they won't take me," said Logan; "but I don't care; I like better to stay at home. Grandma teaches me."

"What does she teach you?" asked Edna.

"O, nice things: 'cat' and 'dog' and 'rat.' I can spell them all and more too. And she tells me stories. And Mary—that's my nurse—teaches me" (in a sing-song voice) "'Up in a tree, Robin I see, picking them one be one'"—

"One *by* one," corrected Gabrielle.

"No; one *be* one. It's her song and she knows. O"—with a rush to the door, as Mr. Crescent entered, for he was a great favorite with both children; and for the few following minutes Logan hung about him, chattering incessantly, until Gabrielle considerably took him home.

"Come and see how nicely we have everything fixed," said Edna (they were now in the store), and Mr. Crescent made a tour of inspection, admiring and exclaiming, entirely to the young lady's satisfaction. When they were again seated, he began:

"Now, young ladies, I have a plan in my head which I have come for the express purpose of proposing to you. May I first inquire if you are fond of the ocean?"

The affirmative answer was unanimous. Then Mr. Crescent continued:

"So far, so good. Now, I presume you all are aware that Christmas is approaching, though who would imagine it to look out upon that sun-lit wealth of flowers over yonder? Our eastern tourists are beginning to turn their faces hitherward, and shortly



before Christmas the hotels will probably be well filled, as I am told an unusual number of guests are expected this winter. These people are always on the search for curios, or articles of any kind peculiar to California, to send as tokens to their eastern friends. Knowing something of your artistic taste and ability, it has occurred to me that you might prepare some of these articles yourselves. You would probably have a good sale for them at remunerative prices. For example, I have seen scalloped shells, or even clamshells, filled with sea-mosses, on cardboard cut to fit the shells, tied together with ribbon at the top. You could easily do that kind of work, and your united genius will suggest new and heretofore unthought-of combinations in the same line."

"Many thanks for the suggestion," said Gladys smiling. "But there are a few difficulties in the way. In the first place, we have no sea-mosses. Secondly, we don't know how to press them if we had them—I tried it once at Newport, but had no success. And I am sure there are all sorts of other difficulties which I can not now think of."

"Your first reason sounds very plausible, Miss Gladys, to say nothing of the second, but I think I can dispose of both. Behold!"

Taking out of his pocket a tolerably large-sized package done up in a piece of newspaper, he untied it and displayed a mass of dried-up stuff, something resembling Irish moss before cooking, though much finer and darker in color.

"Your first objection is already disposed of; here is the moss. I found it in a tiny shop on a side street off

Broadway, after making inquiries at all the other curio stores in the city. They had plenty of mosses pressed and mounted, but that was not what we wanted. The man told me he had gathered these at the Cataline Islands and elsewhere, intending to prepare them himself, but had given up the idea for lack of time, and was glad to dispose of them for a mere trifle. So much for the moss—now, for the preparation. I have a lady friend at my hotel who understands all that sort of thing, and she kindly instructed me in the process. Are you specially busy at present, Miss Gladys?"

"No, our busy time is over for to-day, I think."

"Well, then, Miss Edna, if you will kindly bring me a basin of water I shall be obliged to you. Now, I shall take some sheets from this writing pad—O, I also need a few small pieces of white muslin—and then I shall be ready to initiate you into the mysteries of floating and pressing sea-mosses."

When all was ready, Mr. Crescent took a very small piece from the mass, put it into the water, and lo! the dark-reddish, withered-up pinch gradually unfolded into an exquisitely graceful spray of a brilliant red color. Underneath it he slipped a piece of paper, and when it was well spread out thereon he gently and dexteriously lifted both from the water, without allowing the spray to fall together again. Then, with a hat-pin, he carefully picked out the edges here and there, making it as perfect as possible.

"That is all," he said. "Now I lay it on this flat piece of wood, then cover with this piece of muslin. Upon this we lay others prepared in the same manner, and when we have say six or eight in a pile, we will

lay a heavy weight on top, and the thing is done. Of course, you can prepare as many piles as you like, or put as many in one pile as you choose, but the more there are the longer they take to dry."

"How lovely!" and, "Thank you so much," the girls said, as Edna took the basin in front of her and prepared to float more. A little practice enabled her to do it nicely, and she became so fascinated that she was unwilling to leave off. With the others' help several piles were soon made, with but very little diminution of the original lump. There were dark mosses as well as light ones, with every variation of color between, red predominating. Some of the sprays were small, some large, all exquisite.

"So far, so good," said Mr. Crescent. "Now for the shells. They are for sale at the curio stores, but it occurred to me that you might like to gather them for yourselves, and as I think you told me you had not yet been to the coast, a trip thitherward would not be disagreeable. Am I mistaken in my surmise?"

"It would be lovely, indeed," replied Gladys, to whom his question had been directed, "but—"

"There are no 'buts,' Miss Gladys. It is all arranged. Mrs. Warringsford has been desirous for some time past to take the children for a day's outing on the beach, and my proposal of having you join the party induced her to decide upon going at once. Now, there are quantities of the kind of shells we want at Long Beach, and although the tide is not just as low as we would like it, and as it will be later, still no doubt we can procure all you can use for a long time to come."

"Why, I thought there was low tide more than once every day!" exclaimed Edna.

"So there is, Miss Edna; but there are certain periods in the year when the tide is specially low; this is the best time for gathering the finer kind of shells. The ones we need are to be had, in more or less abundance, at almost any ordinary low tide."

"Can we also get sea-mosses?" asked Edna.

"Not at Long Beach, Miss Edna; nor, in fact, at any of the beaches close to Los Angeles—at least, as far as I know. Some other time we shall spread our wings and take a longer flight, but just at present we must be contented nearer home. Mrs. Warringsford has decided upon the day after to-morrow, if that suits your convenience, and I therefore extend you the invitation in my name as host and in her name as chaperon."

All the girls thanked him warmly, and then Eudora said:

"It won't do to close the store, you know. As I have been such a short time in California, I am not supposed to have seen all the sights, as the others are, so I shall stay at home and keep store."

"O no," said Gladys. "Do let me stay. Indeed, I would rather. I should, indeed."

But the cloud overspreading Mr. Crescent's countenance confirmed Eudora in her suspicion that Gladys' absence would spoil the entire party, so far as he was concerned; she therefore persisted in her determination, and sunshine reigned once more.

"We go by train at nine A. M.," said Mr. Crescent. "You had better take warm wraps, as the wind is apt

to be somewhat lively down there at this season; also rubbers, as it is impossible to prevent the feet from getting wet while picking up shells at low tide."

"It all sounds so perfectly delightful!" exclaimed Edna, "and it's ever so good of you, Mr. Crescent, to take so much trouble for our pleasure!"

About nine o'clock that evening, Mary, the nurse, came over, saying that Mrs. Warringsford had sent her to show Miss Eudora the way to her new quarters, and with affectionate good-nights Eudora departed. Mrs. Warringsford met her at the door, welcomed her warmly, then took her upstairs to her room, where a cheerful fire was burning in a grate—the first Eudora had seen since coming to California. Eastern people do not take kindly to the no-fire system, and even acclimated Californians are beginning to find out more and more that a moderate degree of warmth is conducive, not only to comfort, but to health, so that houses, at the present day, are mostly built with grates.

"How delightful!" exclaimed Eudora. "This looks like home."

"Yes," said Mrs. Warringsford, "I knew you would enjoy it, though it is not really cold to-night. Gabrielle did her best to keep awake until you should come over, but was forced to succumb at last. Now, my dear, make yourself quite at home; if you need anything, ring this bell, and Mary will come. I hope you do not feel uneasy at leaving your sisters alone?"

Eudora hesitated. "Not exactly uneasy, Mrs. Warringsford, but it does seem rather desolate for

them, unaccustomed as they are to being in a building entirely alone."

"Indeed, it does, my dear. Mr. Crescent and I were speaking about it this very afternoon, and I think we have thought of a plan which will make all parties feel comfortable. You shall hear about it tomorrow, but now I ought not to detain you, for I know how tired you must be, from all you have had to do to-day. So good-night, my dear, and pleasant dreams."

"Good night, Mrs. Warringsford, and thank you so much."

Next morning Eudora slipped away early before Gabrielle was awake, for she felt a little anxious to know how her sisters had spent the night. Edna met her at the door, and signed to her not to make a noise as Gladys was still sleeping.

"She hardly slept all night," Edna whispered. "She thought I did not hear her, but every once in a while I felt the bed shake, and I know she was sobbing."

There were tears in Edna's own eyes, and she was paler than Eudora had yet seen her.

"O, well, dear," she said, soothingly, "Gladys will get over it after awhile. She may possibly be thinking of father; perhaps something of late may have brought him up specially vividly to her mind."

"That can hardly be," said Edna, while she as noiselessly as possible lighted the fire. "It came so suddenly, and is lasting so long. I am afraid it is just something dreadful. O, I wish we knew!"

"It is all in our Father's hands, dear Edna. He

loves her even better than we do. No doubt in some way she needs the discipline—and we, too—or it would not be. So be comforted. Some good is sure to come out of it. Besides, she is not nearly so bad as she was the first day; it will gradually pass away. Look up there at that verse on our calendar:

‘Build a little fence of trust around to-day;  
Fill the place with loving deeds and therein stay.  
Look not through the shelt’ring bars upon to-morrow;  
God will help thee bear what comes, of joy or sorrow.’ ”

“O, Eudora, what would we do without you!” exclaimed Edna. “I was so miserable last night and this morning, and it seemed as if I never would be happy again. And now I feel ever so much brighter!”

Gladys’ demeanor, when she joined them at breakfast, was about as usual, the heavy lines under her eyes alone betokening her sleeplessness and mental conflict. Of this, however, Edna’s inexperience took no note, and she was doubly re-assured by her sister’s outward calmness.

Later in the day, Mrs. Warringsford, accompanied by a man carrying a box of tools, came in to ask if she might take the liberty of having an electric bell put up between their place and Eudora’s room in the other house. “It would make us all feel so much more comfortable,” she said; and of course the girls gratefully consented.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The following morning dawned clear and beautiful, without even a trace of the fog which so often ushers in a perfect day in that locality. Mrs. Warringsford's carriage was at the door at precisely eight o'clock. Mr. Warringsford had previously gone with the children and nurse in the electric cars to the station, where Mr. Crescent was to join them.

A twenty-minutes drive brought them to the Arcade depot. As the carriage stopped, Mr. Crescent came forward to assist the ladies to alight; a tall, handsome young man stood beside him.

"Why, Ernest!" exclaimed Mrs. Warringsford, joyfully. "When did you arrive?"

"Late last night, mother; so late that I would not disturb you, but went to Mr. Crescent's hotel, intending to surprise you early this morning. But he informed me of the proposed excursion, and I concluded to meet you here, hoping you might possibly add me to your party."

"Most gladly, my son." And then Mrs. Warringsford presented him to the girls.

The children were awaiting them inside. Both greeted their father rapturously.

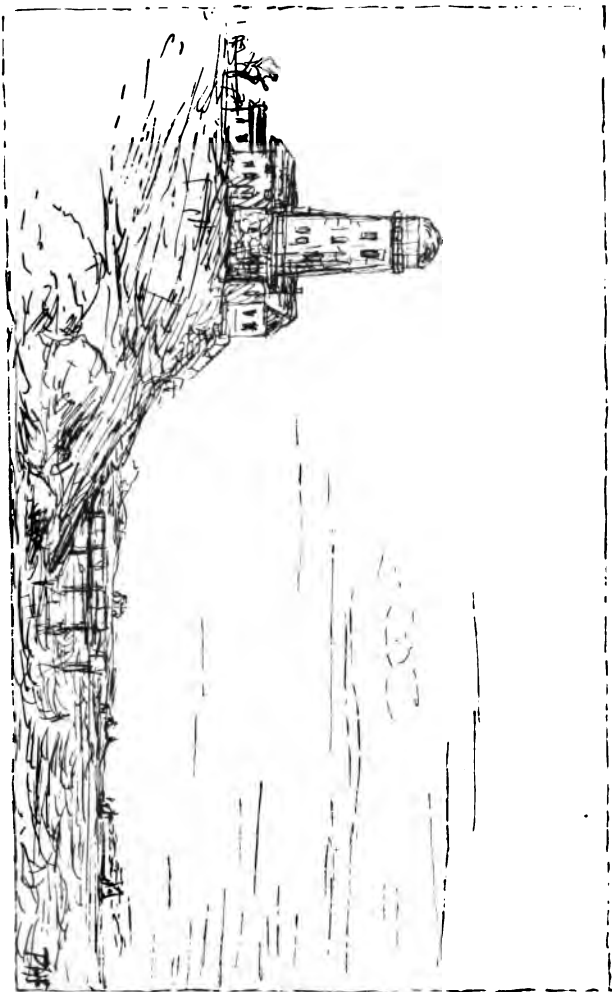
"O, papa! We didn't know you were coming! When did you come? How did you know we were here?" But they never waited for an answer, quite satisfied with the fact that their father was really



there. Soon the train puffed in, and they were fairly off. Three quarters of an hour brought them to their destination—landing them in the town of Long Beach, instead of somewhere on the sea-shore, as Edna had vaguely supposed would be the case. They had quite a little walk to the Beach, but it was a charming one—through a park filled with luxuriant foliage and ever-greens forming summer-houses, arches and other fancy decorations. As they emerged from it, a few steps brought them to the edge of a high bank, down which were wooden steps leading to the shore. How glorious that first sight of the Pacific Ocean! The waves sparkled in the sun-liglit, as the wind tossed their crests into foam, and they chased each other perpetually, in a wild rush for the shore. The beach was a wide, smooth extent of sand ; no rocks to make the scene more picturesque, but less dangerous for children in consequence, and therefore a popular family resort. The day was perfect. The sun had already tempered the crispness of the early morning air, and but little wind was blowing. Mary had brought a camp chair for Mrs. Warringsford, who was soon seated beyond the damp line—for the tide was going out—and with her fur cape around her, and her feet imbedded in the warm, dry sand, she declared that she was more than comfortable.

Mary had provided both children with a calico bag as a receptacle for their treasures, and they were eager to fill them. There were a few scattered shells on the wet sand, but Mr. Crescent said there would be more when the tide was lower.

Soon the others were busy picking up whatever



A PACIFIC COAST LIGHTHOUSE



treasures they could find, each one differing as to his or her idea of what a "treasure" consisted in; this one passing by carelessly what that one snatched up rejoicingly. And therein lies a moral; but this is a story, and the reader may search out the moral for himself if so disposed.

Mr. Ernest Warringsford soon threw himself on the sand at his mother's feet, "to give my dear mother a full, particular and exhaustive account of myself during my month's absence," he laughingly said.

Mr. Crescent took possession of Gladys' satchel and devoted himself to her entertainment, now and then picking up a peculiarly pretty shell or pebble, but generally only sauntering idly along the beach, in pleasant converse. Mary had her hands full trying to keep the children from venturing too far after the retreating waves, thus running the risk of being overtaken by the oncoming waters before they could get out of reach. Edna was therefore really the only one who settled down to business, and faithfully picked up shell after shell as soon as spied. It was an unusually good day for shells—so said a boy who was sauntering idly along the shore. As he passed Edna, she asked him a question, which led to more, and soon the lad became quite friendly, even to the extent of removing his shoes and stockings, and wading for treasures out of Edna's reach.

"I don't see where you find so many shells to pick up," said Gladys, as they sauntered near her sister again. "I am sure we have scarcely seen any, and you seem to have quite a number."

"I have often heard," replied Edna, saucily, "that

the sea never reveals her treasures except to earnest seekers ; and really, Mr. Crescent and yourself scarcely strike me as coming under that category."

"O, well, Miss Edna," said Mr. Crescent, "we are at present merely skirmishing ; by and bye we shall set to the conflict in dead earnest. But just at this moment, we have some business up in the town ; so we shall excuse ourselves and hope to rejoin you in the course of half an hour."

As they passed Mrs. Warringsford, Mr. Crescent informed her likewise of their purpose. Soon the two were up the steps again, and a short walk brought them into the town. Mr. Crescent entered a small hotel, where he held a colloquy with the powers inside ; then rejoined Gladys, who had remained without, looking at some articles in a curio shop near by. When they returned to the beach, Gladys set diligently to work to help her sister, and the tide being now entirely gone out, they had soon a goodly number of shells collected. The variegated tints and stripes of the very small clam-shells were lovely, some being of a bright yellow color ; and Gladys' artistic eye saw endless possibilities therein. Presently Mr. Ernest joined them, Mr. Crescent taking his place beside Mrs. Warringsford.

"Papa," said Logan, "I do wish you would go in wading like that boy. You could get us lots of pretty things."

But his father smilingly declined.

At a quarter before one, Mr. Crescent summoned the party together, and they all proceeded to the hotel, where he had ordered luncheon. As they

passed by a long, low, wooden building, upon the walls of which were rudely printed in large letters, "Clam Chowder," Gabrielle exclaimed: "Papa, why couldn't we have gone in there and had dinner?"

"In the first place, little daughter, we have been invited elsewhere. Secondly, the sign 'Clam Chowder' is a base deception, there being absolutely nothing to be had in that building until the season shall have fairly opened."

They had a merry repast at a retired table in the general dining-room, the hotel not boasting of more private accommodations. All did their best to be cheerful, Mr. Ernest making a special effort to be entertaining; but it was evident that it was an exertion, for he was naturally of a taciturn disposition, and relapsed into grave silence when the effort was over.

"How nice he is!" thought Edna. "I do like serious men."

"How much more agreeable Mr. Crescent is," thought Gladys. "The two are not to be compared. Older men are so much more interesting than younger ones."

The excitement had temporarily driven her gloom away, causing her to appear almost like her former self. At times, however, recollection would suddenly return, and a spasm of pain would contract her countenance. Many a furtive glance had Mr. Crescent given her during the course of the day, and a look of grave concern occasionally overspread his usually cheerful appearance. While returning home in the train, he and Mrs. Warringsford happened to be seated side by side, a little apart from the others. After

some general conversation, the lady remarked in a low tone: "Have you noticed, Mr. Crescent, how badly Miss Gladys is looking of late?"

"Indeed I have, Mrs. Warringsford. It is too evident to escape notice."

"I fear the entire change in their way of living is too much for her strength. I understand they had formerly everything that heart could desire."

"That is true, Mrs. Warringsford. Their father was very wealthy at one time. He almost idolized these girls, especially Gladys, I have heard, lavishing upon her everything that money could obtain. But if I read her rightly, she has too much character to allow reverses or difficulties of any kind easily to overcome her. No, I am persuaded that is not the matter."

"Probably you are right," said Mrs. Warringsford, thoughtfully. "For the day I first met her, while she had an air of sadness entirely natural to one having lately passed through such a sorrow, yet she certainly did not look as she does now. And she is so thin—the dear girl! I am really much concerned about her. I am becoming attached to all those young ladies, but I must acknowledge that, so far, my preference is for Miss Eudora. She strikes me as being superior, in some respects, to her sisters, though they are all refined and lovely."

If Mr. Crescent did not agree with his friend in regard to Eudora, he kept his opinion to himself, merely remarking: "Yes, they are very charming young ladies," and then changed the subject.

Mrs. Warringsford's carriage was in waiting at the depot, and soon Gladys and Edna were deposited

safely at their own door. Eudora greeted them warmly.

"Why, it seems as if you had been away for a week," she said, brightly. "I have kept store finely, and have sold ever so much. But, girls, I have a confession to make. Really and truly, I haven't a thing for supper—only bread. We all forgot that I could not leave the store to buy provisions, and there is nothing left from breakfast except half a loaf of bread. But, now you are home, I shall go to the nearest restaurant, and you will soon see the result."

As she was engaged in putting on her hat, a knock came to the back door, and there stood Mrs. Warringsford's butler, bearing a large waiter covered by a napkin.

"Mrs. Warringsford sent this with her compliments," said the man, respectfully. "There is a note on the waiter."

He laid his load on the table, and, remarking that he would come for the dishes later, took his departure.

"O, how lovely!" exclaimed Edna, as she lifted the napkin. "Girls, do come and see! You can take off your hat, Eudora; here are provisions enough to last for a week."

The note was addressed to Eudora, and was as follows:

*My Dear Miss Eudora:*

I had prepared a lunch for our picnic, but found that our friend, Mr. Crescent, had made other arrangements. I, therefore, send you your rightful share of



the treat, and hope you will enjoy it as much as we expect to enjoy ours.

Sincerely your friend,

L. WARRINGSFORD.

"How kind," said Eudora. "Well, girls, I am truly much relieved, for you know I am not accustomed to buying provisions, and was not remarkably successful the last and only time I tried it."

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Edna, as one cover after another was lifted. "Quail on toast, fried chicken, oyster patties, Charlotte Russes, jellies, celery and all manner of etceteras. This is a treat sure enough. There is enough for a dozen people. Well, Eudora, I suppose this will help to make up your little song tonight, wont it?"

"Certainly, dear. It is surely a part of the goodness and mercy following us all through the day. We have only to open our faith-eyes to see an endless procession of blessings."

After supper was cleared away, Edna produced the bag which she had nearly filled with shells, and emptied the contents upon the table, sand and all. "It is a good thing that this is the kitchen table," said Gladys. "But it would have been all the same where Edna is concerned."

"Now, Gladys, that is a dreadful insinuation," said Edna, privately delighted to hear her sister speak in her former sarcastic manner; of late she had not seemed to have spirits enough for sarcasm. "And I have something to tell about *you*. Where is your satchel? Produce it, and let Eudora see the contents."

"Very well," said Gladys, in her calm, slow way. "She is quite welcome to the sight, if it will afford her any pleasure." And she brought the satchel, and added its contents to her sister's pile.

"About twenty shells," said Edna. "You see, Eudora, she was otherwise engaged. Besides, I suspect her dignity prevented her from stooping as often as she might have felt inclined."

"You are mistaken, my dear. But I certainly give you credit for indefatigable patience and industry."

"Look how handsome some of those shells are," said Edna. "But they do not look half so pretty as they did down at the beach. What is the matter?"

"Because they are dry," said Gladys, "and the lime on them shows more plainly. We must soak them in a solution of muriatic acid and water to remove the lime, then give them a slight coat of varnish. That is the way they have treated those we see in the stores, Mr. Crescent says."

"Then we had better set to work at once," said Edna, "to get everything ready. The mosses will be dry by to-morrow, and when they are arranged, the varnish will be dry. . You know, Gladys, we are depending on your artistic ability to make this thing a success. We shall act under your directions."

Gladys did not at once reply, and Eudora, glancing up at her, saw that sudden look of distress, so common of late, pass over her countenance. But she only replied in her usual calm tones, "I shall do the best I can, though I fear you overrate my skill."

Exceedingly busy were the few following days, and at their close, there was quite a display of pretty

trifles. Cards of sea-mosses arranged like baskets, with shells dotted over them here and there—Mr. Crescent had brought them a small box of tiny shells suited for the purpose. Some larger cards with the mosses arranged in the form of a cross, or other designs; about two dozen pairs of large shells tied together with narrow, bright-colored ribbons, of which Edna produced a bagful—"the remains of my doll-hood days," she said. These were filled with cardboard cut to fit the shells—perhaps six in each—upon which were fastened with library paste tiny sprays of mosses of every shade of color. Upon the inside of some of the single shells Gladys had painted pretty little sea-views, all of which, tastefully arranged in the window and counter, formed a charming display. Mrs. Warringsford was delighted.

"My dear girls," she said, "you have made a great success. I must notify some of my friends who are looking for remembrances to send East. I am also on the same search, and as many of these are the most artistic I have seen in that line, I shall be your first customer."

"I must also have some, to send to my daughter and her family," said Mr. Crescent, who was more than delighted with his *protégé's* success. "I had no idea, Miss Gladys, that you painted so well. You are really quite an artist, though your modesty led me to believe that you were a mere dauber."

"Indeed," said Edna, "Gladys took lessons of one of the finest artists in New York; and he said jokingly one day, that if she ever needed to make her living in that way, she was quite competent to do so. But

Gladys never believed it, but always said she only smattered."

Within the few following days, their sales were many and profitable, for during the holiday season these California souvenirs sell at a high price when really well done. Gabrielle had watched with deep interest their progress. "O, how I wish I could paint!" she would often say. "I have been begging Grandma to let me take lessons, but she always says, not yet, it would interfere with my studies; for I am rather backward, you see, in some things. But if she would only allow me to learn, I would try just as hard in everything else. Do coax her to let me take lessons, Miss Gladys."

"Perhaps, if you try very hard now in the studies in which you are deficient, you might soon gain your wish," said Gladys.

And Gabrielle made a firm resolve upon the spot to that effect.

By Christmas, almost everything had been sold, and the girls found they had realized almost thirty dollars from the sale of those articles alone, besides having sold more than usual that week of their ordinary goods.

## CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Warringsford had given the girls an urgent invitation to join her family in their Christmas dinner, but Eudora had agreed with Gladys that it was best to decline the kindness, somewhat to the disappointment of Edna, who could see no reason for such declination.

"Well," said Mrs. Warringsford, "if you will not give us the pleasure of your society, you shall at least not spend the day in cooking."

And this much, at least, they could do no otherwise than accept. Memories of the happy past came over each heart on that sunny Christmas morning, so unlike the frosty landscape their eyes had been accustomed to dwell upon at this season—so unlike their position, also, in every other respect. Each had prepared a little gift for the others, Eudora having reserved for this occasion some handsome books for Gladys, and for Edna some pretty trifles, in dress especially, which she had bought when in Paris. As they sat lingering over their late breakfast—the store was closed for the day—a series of faint thumps came upon the kitchen door. Edna opened it, and there stood, just as ragged as of yore, their first customer! This time, a tiny girl was beside him, thin as himself, and with the same large, hungry, brown eyes.

"Good morning," said Edna, pleasantly, as without awaiting an invitation both pushed their way in.

"Good morning, little man," said Eudora, as he

came over to the table and stared hungrily at the food. "Is this your little sister?"

"Yes, that's Sissy. She's hungry, and so am I."

"Had you no breakfast?" asked Edna, as Eudora proceeded to cut two generous slices of bread and butter.

"No, nothin' but a cracker. And pap an' mam's both drunk this mornin', 'cause its Christmas—an' I told Sissy you'd give us somethin'."

"How old is Sissy?"

"Six, an' I'm eight. An' there's a baby—but I don't take no stock in him, an' I wish he wasn't never borned. He screams an' cries all the time."

Large mouthfuls now stopped his utterance for the time being, and Eudora drew Gladys into the next room.

"Gladys, shall we invite these children to be our Christmas guests? We are sure to have far more than we need for ourselves, and I think we should all enjoy it better if these little waifs had plenty too."

"Just as you like," replied her sister indifferently. "I am sure I have no objection."

And somehow into her mind came floating words she had once read in her happy, careless days:

"Is thy cup of comfort waning?  
Rise and share it with another."

O, surely, her cup of comfort had utterly run out. Could anything, in earth or Heaven, ever fill it again!

About one o'clock their dinner arrived—an early one, Mrs. Warringsford had previously informed

them, on account of the children. Gabrielle and Logan had already made them a short call, bearing a wealth of roses and other flowers, such as only California can supply in December. Edna had brought into requisition every spare tumbler and dish which the house could afford—having no vases—even utilizing some old tin cans, concealing their identity with festoons of smilax. Each room, including the store, was adorned with fragrant blossoms.

"This is something we did not have in our eastern home," said Eudora. "Do look at those immense dark roses, and that variety of yellow, and those exquisite deep and pale pink buds. And what immense fuschias! I never saw such large ones. What quantities of daisies, too; those came off that large bush over there—it is so strange to have bushes of daisies. And O, Gladys, here is mignonette—father's favorite flower—I thought I detected the odor."

But Gladys had suddenly turned away, as though she had not heard, and presently she left the room. A few moments after the arrival of dinner their guests appeared, with faces and hands clean in streaks, hair plastered down with water, and a slight improvement on the morning's rags. But to the girls' surprise they were not alone. Lugged in the boy's thin arms was a ten-months old baby, bonier, more hollow-eyed, if possible, than the others, but with a certain pathetic infantile beauty, that could not fail to touch with tender compassion every feeling heart.

"Had to bring the kid," explained Tony briefly. "He was a cryin' awful bad, an' I hated to think of

Sis an' me gittin plenty an' him empty. So I jist slipped him out of her arms while she was a sleepin'—drunk, you know, an' *him* too—an' I guess you can give him a bone to keep him quiet. I don't take no stock in him, and I wish he hadn't never been borned, I do; but I hate awful to hear him cryin'."

There were tears in Gladys' eyes as she lifted the baby out of the boy's now weary arms.

"I will take him into the sitting-room, Edna," she said, "and feed him, if you will heat some milk, and bring it to me with a slice of bread. Eudora and you can attend to the others—this baby shall be my charge."

Two plates of turkey cut into small pieces, plenty of mashed potatoes, cranberry jelly, bread and butter, followed by plum pudding, composed the main part of the children's dinner, which the girls had decided to give them before taking their own, feeling that the little ones would enjoy it all the better if left to themselves. They had also decided that the oyster patties, chicken salad, mince pie and ice-cream, would be more than the little starved systems could manage, so wisely limited the *menu*.

How they did enjoy it all! Once, in an enforced waiting for the pudding, Eudora heard Tony say to his sister in an undertone, "Golly! don't this beat all, Sissy! An' the kid's stopped cryin' too!" It was evident, in spite of the boy's apparently heartless remarks, that his baby brother's welfare was very near his heart, for it was only when the cries from the other room were stilled, that he displayed unqualified delight in his dinner. Eudora also noticed that his



eyes were often fixed upon the tot beside him, with such a keen relish of every mouthful she swallowed, that it was almost like a second dinner to him.

Meantime Gladys was feeding the baby with the bread and milk, rather alarmed at its capacity for "more," and feeling, in her inexperience, that possibly she was doing it serious injury. At last, however, the limit was reached, and the child turned his head aside with a grunt. Then Gladys gently washed the little face and hands—she had not ventured to do it until his hunger had been appeased. She took a strange pleasure in these duties—duties which a month ago she would have shrunk from; they seemed to soothe the sore heart which the ordinary routine of life only chafed and irritated. Rocking him softly for a few moments, the pretty blue eyes drooped—more and more—closed, then opened again—closed and opened, as if loth to shut out such unaccustomed comfort, until at last the heavy lids could no longer be lifted, and baby slept. Gladys laid him down on the little sofa, and covered him up warmly. Eudora, looking in at the moment, quietly slipped away, feeling that the bitterness accompanying this great mysterious sorrow, had, for the moment at least, been laid to rest.

"Do you know what day this is, Tony?" asked Eudora, when at last it seemed as if the children could not manage another mouthful.

"'Course it's Christmus," answered Tony, surprised at the question.

"And why do we keep Christmas, do you know?" The boy looked at her vacantly. "Dunno," he

said—then a bright idea struck him, and he added, “Maybe it’s because the war got ended. That’s what Jim Stokes said—but I said I guessed not, ’cause there ain’t no fire-crackers nor nothin’—an’ if ’twas about war there’d be some noise, wouldn’t there?”

And then and there Eudora made a resolve. “Tony,” she said, “would you like to come here to-morrow afternoon, and bring Sissy and that other boy if he wants to come, and I will tell you some pretty stories? To-morrow—Sunday, you know.”

“To-morrer,” he echoed. “Blamed if I didn’t think this was Sunday. I kin come ef it’s Sunday to-morrer—’cause pap an’ mam’ll be drunk agin—they always bes on Sundays—that’s why I reckoned ’twas to-day. They don’t always let me go when they’re straight—but I kin slip off other times. We’ll come, sure.”

Reluctantly Gladys put the sleeping child into the boy’s arms, warning him to carry the baby carefully, so as not to awaken it.

“You bet,” said Tony, almost staggering beneath the load, light as it really was. “I don’t take no stock in him, but I hate mortally to have him holler.”

Then both children took an unceremonious leave.

“Well,” said Edna, laughing, “that youngster is a case, sure enough. But one cannot help liking him. Now for our own dinner.”

Just as it was about over, in walked Mr. Crescent, carrying a large, flat parcel. After exchanging the compliments of the season, he said, rather hesitatingly:

“Young ladies, I have brought you something

which I fear may give you momentary pain, but which I trust may prove an ever-increasing source of pleasure. I borrowed from Miss Gladys one day—as she will remember—a photograph of your honored father, and I took the liberty of having a large painting made from it. I think—”

While speaking, he had been unwrapping the parcel, and as the life-like portrait was now fairly exposed to view, Gladys gave a stifled cry, and turning hastily away, left the room. Poor Mr. Crescent became all manner of colors; then, taking up the picture, he laid it with its face to the wall.

“I am really much distressed,” he began. “My carelessness—

But Endora interrupted him, the tears in her eyes.

“Don’t think so for one moment, Mr. Crescent,” she said earnestly, laying an appealing hand upon his arm. “You are always too kind. It is only that Gladys has been troubled about something of late—we do not know what it is—and everything seems to bring it to her mind. She will get over it—I am sure she will—and then this portrait will be as great a comfort to her as it is now to Edna and me. It is so, so like him; he looks just as he did that last time I saw him on the steamer.”

And Edna, also moved to tears, thanked him most heartily. But he remained sad and abstracted, though evidently making an effort to be otherwise. In about fifteen minutes, Gladys returned, cold and calm as ever.

“Forgive me, Mr. Crescent,” she said, in her usual

tones," and believe me I am most grateful for your kindness. I shall not be so foolish again."

Mr. Crescent brightened up at once, and a pleasant hour followed.

"Now, Miss Edna," he said, handing her a square white paper parcel, "here is something for your special benefit. Being the 'baby,' this is your rightful possession."

Edna laughingly opened it, and such a tempting array of French bonbons of all shapes and colors met her eye!

"O thank you," she exclaimed. "This is lovely! and just what we needed to complete our Christmas festivities! I never used to feel as if it were really Christmas, unless I had a big box of chocolates. You must help us eat them."

By and bye, the Warringsford children came in again. Eudora and Gabrielle had become firm friends, even in this brief period, while Logan was Edna's devoted admirer.

"Grandma says, won't you come over and see our Christmas tree," said Gabrielle, "since you wouldn't come last night, when all the people were there? It isn't quite so nice as it was last night, but there are lots of pretty things on it still. Please make them come, Mr. Crescent."

"Indeed, I don't think we need any persuasion, Gabrielle," said Eudora. "Do we girls? Only"—and she hesitated as she glanced at Mr. Crescent.

"O, I shall certainly accompany you, Miss Eudora, if I may be allowed the pleasure. I have already seen the tree, but shall be delighted to make a more

thorough examination. Young ladies, I am at your disposal."

Gabrielle and Logan jumped about with delight, and the girls went to put on their hats. Then all proceeded to the other house, where they were warmly welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Warringsford, while Mr. Ernest passed the compliments of the season with his usual grave politeness. After a short conversation, they were ushered into the back drawing-room, where the tall, stately tree had been relighted for their benefit.

Many beautiful articles still hung from its branches. The decorations were numerous and costly, including French confections of various kinds. When all had been duly admired and exclaimed over, Mr. Warringsford said, laughingly: "It seems to me there are names on some of those articles. Suppose we investigate."

Holding up a pretty little white box, he read the label, "Miss Edna, from Logan," and cutting it off, he presented it to her. Then he detached a similar one for Eudora, from Gabrielle; and still another for Gladys, from nobody in particular, it appeared. This last box contained an exquisite mourning pin, set with tiny pearls—the very thing that suited Gladys' fastidious taste, and for which she had especially wished, in order to complete her dress. Not knowing whom to thank, she gave general thanks, no one in especial appearing to receive them.

Eudora's and Edna's presents were also pins—much simpler, of delicate Mexican filigree silver work—very dainty and pretty. Then each had a handsome box

of chocolates, and fancy bonbons of various descriptions.

"Well, we *are* laden!" exclaimed Edna. Thank you all, so much." And of course Gladys and Eudora joined in the thanks.

Then they were invited into the dining-room, where oyster soup, lobster salad, ices and other delicacies were served. This was a complete surprise, as Gabrielle, in her invitation, had said nothing of a supper.

"I was just determined," said Mrs. Warringsford, "that you should have at least one meal with us on Christmas day. I quite understand your not wishing to come to dinner, as we had company then; but I knew there was no reason for your not joining us to-night. So forgive my little surprise party, will you not, my dear girls?"

It was impossible not to enjoy such genial hospitality. Even Gladys cast all gloom aside, and exerted herself to be as agreeable as she well knew how to be. Edna watched Eudora now and then while the latter was conversing with Mr. Ernest, anxious to know her impression of him, and whether her sister admired him as she did herself. Eudora had met him several times, but they never had held any special conversation. This was therefore the first time that she felt at all acquainted with him.

Gabrielle hung about her father, listening quietly to the conversation, with the interest of an intelligent, well-bred child.

At ten o'clock, Mr. Crescent escorted Gladys and Edna home; Gabrielle delighted that for once she was awake when Eudora was there, and enjoying the

prospect of a little chat while both were preparing for bed. Scarcely, however, had the child's head touched the pillow, when, tired out with the unusual excitement and late hour, she had fallen asleep. Then Eudora was left free to pursue the meditation to which to-night she felt more than usually inclined.

It had been, on the whole, a happy Christmas-day. To be sure, the cloud of Gladys' mysterious sorrow still rested upon them, but faith rested in the assurance of the "all things" working for good, and saw the sun shining beyond. And for herself? Had ever such a Christmas dawned before? A few days previously she had somewhere noticed a little poem of which one of the verses ran:

" O day of time, how dark! O sky and earth,  
How dull your hue!  
O day of Christ, how bright! O sky and earth,  
Made fair and new!"

It was all true, indeed, but not in the sense the poet had in view. Formerly, her life might have been described as a "day of time"—a day of earth, liable to storms, darkness and clouds, tossed about with every wind that blew, nothing dependable, nothing anchored, nothing fixed. True, she had long ago accepted the Lord to be her Savior, her Master, her King. She had prayed to Him daily, and in some vague manner had believed that, away up in His far-off Heaven, He heard her prayers; that, in some vague way or other, she was helped and perhaps kept from special harm—in fact, she would have been afraid not to pray. But it was as a duty that could not safely be left undone; a part and parcel of the Christian vows she had assumed,

a cold, perfunctory, lifeless, though, as far as her light went, faithful performance of the promises she had made to her God and herself—all was vague, unsatisfactory, uncertain.

Now, it was the "day of Christ." Through His Holy Spirit, He had Himself come to dwell within her heart—to be her constant Companion, her Guide, her Counselor, her close familiar Friend. Now, He was so near that a whisper reached His ever-listening ear—*consciously* reached it, so that she watched for the answer, which never failed to come. And as each answer came, Faith took an ever higher, ever bolder stand, and what would once have been regarded as the boldest presumption, had now become the daily attitude of her watching heart.

"O day of Christ, how bright!" she joyfully whispered; then, singing her nightly song, she fell asleep.



## CHAPTER X.

Sunday afternoon came, and Eudora was all ready for her class. Gabrielle, to whom she had confided her plan, and who had eagerly entered into it, had found a long, low bench stored away in the barn, and had had it carried into the little kitchen, where it just filled one side of the board wall. She had also brought over a small basket filled with animal crackers—"for maybe, Miss Eudora, they will like better to come if they get something to eat. You know you said I could be your assistant if the class should grow large; and grandma said this might be my part of the business."

The two were fast becoming firm friends, and Mrs. Warringsford had every day reason to rejoice that it was so, as Eudora's influence told more and more upon the little girl's impressionable nature.

About two o'clock, exactly one hour before the time fixed, a knock came to the back door, and without waiting for an invitation, three children pushed their way in. Tony leading, as one who had the right of way, his little sister, 'Meely—Amelia—closely following, while bringing up the rear, in a hesitating, shame-faced manner, came a tangle-haired, dilapidated-looking twelve-year old boy—"just to please the little chap," he explained, when Eudora spoke to him, "'cause he wanted me so bad to come; but 'taint going to do no good."

Tony's eyes flashed defiance, and his fist would

doubtless have been raised in challenge of this bold denial of his teacher's ability, only—his arms were again full, though this time the baby was sound asleep.

"She's drunk agin, bein' Sunday," he announced, "an' I knowed the young 'un would holler when he wokened up, so I fetched him along. I don't take no stock in him, an' I wisht he'd never been borned, but I do mortal hate to hear him yell."

With which logical explanation, he was about to lay the child on the bare floor in the corner, when Gladys, who had entered at that moment for a glass of water, took him out of the boy's arms, and, carrying him to the sitting-room, laid him gently down upon the sofa. Then she prepared some bread and milk to have ready for his waking.

Eudora's first experience at teaching a mission class—as this might be called—was something to be remembered. Such dense ignorance as to religious truths she had never even imagined, and it seemed to her at the end of the hour that she had not made the faintest impression, except in the way of surprise. But the ground had to be broken up before the seed could be sown; that this was being done might possibly have been inferred from the remarks of the big boy to Tony, just after leaving: "Wall, I never heard the likes afore! I feel as ef I was standin' on me head instead of me feet. I dunno what's it all about!"

"I told you so, Jim!" returned Tony, triumphantly. "I knowed she'd puzzle you out an' out. I dunno neither! She's awful smart, she is."

Nevertheless, both boys, for the rest of the day, refrained from using many bad words which had become to them as their native language, with an instinctive feeling that their teacher would not like it, although neither could have given any reason for his action. And Eudora! Two years ago, she would have considered her attempt as a total failure, and would have been tempted to give up in despair. Now she thanked God that she had been permitted to teach even the least of His little ones; and feeling that she had faithfully striven to do her best, she gave over the responsibility for results into the hands of Him who had undertaken that part of the contract, assured that there could be no failure there. It is the endeavor to take both God's part and theirs upon their own weak shoulders that breaks down prematurely so many earnest workers, and often lays them in their graves before their day is fully ended.

One month had passed since the girls' new life had begun; and aided by their friend and business director, Mr. Crescent, they took a financial view of the situation. The summing-up at first sight was satisfactory. They had made their living, rent included, had covered the interest from their investment, and had even laid in a small supply of a few things lacking; but—that was all. And then, as Mr. Crescent reluctantly reminded them, this having been Christmas month, their sales were nearly the double of what they must ordinarily expect. They would also need to lay in a fresh supply of many small articles, which, when they bought the stock, had been practically thrown into the bargain. Besides, no allowance had been

made for clothes, which, sooner or later, *must* wear out—nor for possible repairs, nor for unforeseen circumstances of any kind. After all, it was not entirely satisfactory, at least to the far-seeing eyes of their friend, and he looked somewhat grave at the close of their investigations.

"You have done very well indeed, young ladies," he said, assuming a cheerful tone, "and have managed your finances remarkably well for such novices in housekeeping and storekeeping, and in the art of not spending money. But still, while there is no deficiency this month—you have even a small balance in the treasury—still, we can hardly expect the same amount sold during the coming months, and we must consider some way of adding to the income."

"I have been thinking for some time past," said Eudora, "that three of us were too many to manage this one little house and store. But I wanted to see Gladys and Edna well started before I turned my attention elsewhere."

Gladys gave a startled look, and Edna exclaimed "why Eudora, your education has not been one particle more practical than Gladys' or mine, and I don't see what you could do!"

"O, yes," said Gladys, smiling, "Eudora had one practical accomplishment beyond what you or I could boast of. Don't you remember, when Mademoiselle used to hunt up our old clothes to give us to take to those poor families, Eudora, how beautifully you patched and mended them so that we said they looked almost as good as new? Unfortunately, however, that accomplishment is not likely to be of any service to

us—at least, not in the present whole condition of our wardrobes!”

“Is it not?” said Eudora, quietly. “That is precisely the accomplishment with which I propose to eke out our slender finances.”

“Not really!” exclaimed Edna. Gladys was silent, and Mr. Crescent gave Eudora a half inquiring, half amused look.

“Yes, really, Edna. I have been considering for some time past what I could do, but nothing seemed to suggest itself. The other evening, Mrs. Warringsford was looking over the children’s clothes, as they had come from the laundry, and she showed me a large tear on one of Logan’s new white suits, and various rents in both the children’s clothes. She remarked that Mary, the nurse, ought to be able to keep them in order, but that she was not gifted in that respect, and she was such a faithful, devoted woman, that it did not seem desirable to make a change. ‘If I could only find some one,’ she said, ‘to come once a week, to look over the clean clothes, and do whatever mending should be needed for the household in general, but especially for the children!’ Then my former talents in that line rushed into my head, and at once I asked Mrs. Warringsford to let me try if I could not manage to suit her. She was somewhat surprised, I suppose, but the end of the matter is, that I am to spend every Friday there, overhauling the family wardrobe; and Mrs. Warringsford has undertaken to procure me a similar position in several of her friends’ families.”

"Eudora!" exclaimed Edna, in a half comic, half earnest manner, "what *are* you bringing us to?"

"To comfort and prosperity, I hope, dear," replied Eudora, playfully; but she looked somewhat anxiously at Gladys. To the surprise of all their aristocratic sister made no demur. If anything more than another could have marked the change in Gladys, it was this. Eudora and Edna would have preferred having her exclaim and protest as of old, rather than to see the cold indifference with which she received the intelligence.

"I cannot see why Eudora should not do as she pleases," she said calmly "Why should sewing be any worse than keeping store? We have to live, and I don't think anything matters much."

Mr. Crescent gave her a scrutinizing, puzzled look, then said, in an uncertain way, "I am sure, Miss Eudora, your resolution is most laudable. I extremely regret there being any necessity for such a step, but—well, since it must be taken, you could have no better starting-place for your undertaking, than in the home of our mutual friend, Mrs. Warringsford."

"I am sure of that, Mr. Crescent," said Eudora. "She is indeed a friend, and I am very grateful to her for her kindness to all of us. I have very little doubt as to the success of my undertaking, for, as the girls say, I have really a gift in that line, and I am truly thankful for the opportunity of putting it in practice."

"Well," said Gladys, slowly, "I also have had an offer"—Mr. Crescent started, and looked at her

anxiously. "Mrs. Warringsford has asked me to teach Logan for a couple of hours every day. I told her I did not think he would learn anything, but she insists on my at least making the attempt, and if I am successful she will procure me some other children of the same age in the neighborhood."

"Very good indeed," said Mr. Crescent, gleefully. "That is the very thing, Miss Gladys! I am quite sure you will succeed. This is very good news indeed!"

"Yes, I think it will just suit you," said Eudora, privately delighted at the prospect of there being anything to divert Gladys' mind from her haunting grief. "You were always the most patient of us three. Mademoiselle used to say, when we would become discouraged at some specially knotty lesson, 'look at your sister, Miss Gladys, she is the perseverance and patience itself.'"

"And sarcastic," interrupted Gladys. "You forget the many times she would say, 'do not be so sarcastic, Miss Gladys. Sarcasm is not becoming to a lady.'"

"O well," said Eudora, "that is a thing of the past; and I am convinced, with Mr. Crescent, that you will succeed admirably with young children."

"So am I," said Edna. "Why, girls, our fortunes are looking up—we are in the fair way of becoming millionaires! So the store will be left mainly in my hands, and I mean to set my wits to work to make it a roaring success."

Edna hoped that Gladys would correct her unladylike expression, as of old, but she was disappointed.

It was evident that Gladys did not care enough for anything, even to find fault.

"When do your new duties commence, Miss Gladys?" asked Mr. Crescent.

"On Monday next. This is Wednesday, and I did not care to begin in the middle of the week."

After a little more conversation, Mr. Crescent took his leave. Then Edna said, "Really, Eudora, I did not want to say much before Mr. Crescent, but I do seriously wish you had not undertaken the position of mender of old clothes. It does seem an unnecessary lowering of the family."

"My dear little sister," said Eudora, pleasantly, "you are not regarding it in the right light. In the first place, this is an age when a woman can engage in almost any kind of honest work, and yet hold her own with sensible people. The fact of a man having been at any time in his life at the very foot of the social ladder is no drawback to him, and it is rapidly becoming the case with women. Of course, it is not precisely what I would have chosen for myself. But for some time past I had foreseen that this little store would not maintain us all, and had been praying for some way to open by which I could add to our income. So I knew the way would open, and was watching my opportunity. When it came I recognized it as the answer to my prayer, and felt as sure that it was God-sent as I am sure of anything. Therefore, dear, I did not dare to refuse it; and if I do this humble work well and faithfully, doubtless He will, in his own good time, give me something better."

On Friday morning Eudora began her new duties.



Mrs. Warringsford informed her that she had procured her a similar position in three families among her acquaintances. Then she hesitated a little, and finally said: "You must try not to mind, my dear, if among these people you find some snobbish enough to treat you coldly on account of your work. This is inevitable among those to whom money is the chief good in life, and who have not refinement and cultivation enough in themselves to be capable of recognizing them in others."

"I am quite well aware of this, Mrs. Warringsford, but I have counted the cost, and I don't think I shall mind it much. I can at least try it, and if I do my work well, I hardly think the rest will matter much."

But Eudora fared better than Mrs. Warringsford feared. Her dignity compelled respect, and her sweet face and manners, together with her aristocratic demeanor, commanded admiration everywhere. Even those who began otherwise gradually fell into the way of treating her as an equal, following the lead of Mrs. Warringsford, who constantly spoke of her as her friend, and who took her out driving or walking with herself whenever opportunity offered, or Eudora could be induced to go. Besides, the spirit of the age was working, though slowly, and a self-supporting woman who did her duty and maintained her dignity could never now be looked down upon as formerly, unless by the wholly ignorant.

A week passed, and Gladys was becoming much interested in her new employment. Logan was an ordinarily bright boy, full of life and spirits, but under perfect control, so that Gladys found no diffi-

culty in his management. He had not even learned his alphabet thoroughly, but Gladys, following the method by which she had herself been taught, plunged him at once into easy reading, surprising both him and herself by the speedy results. After awhile, to be sure, when lessons ceased to be a novelty, progress seemed slower and more tedious; still it was progress, and, so far, satisfactory. Before long, three more boys were added to the class; and, on the whole, Gladys enjoyed teaching them—as much, at least, as was possible in her present frame of mind.

Edna was delighted to have the store so completely in her own hands. She learned to make many little fancy articles attractive to children; while Gladys, in her leisure hours, painted California scenes upon slabs of orange or other native woods, which, if there were at present no sale for them, could be laid aside for the following Christmas. But occasionally a transient visitor would make a purchase. This was almost clear gain, as well as the other fancy articles of their own make.

## CHAPTER XI.

Shortly after Eudora's arrival from Europe, Edna, with her usual keen-sightedness, had noticed that her sister watched closely the hour for the postman, as if she were specially expecting letters. Often one would come from Aunt Julia, but the very next day Eudora would watch just the same, and Edna came to the conclusion that a letter was looked for, which so far had failed to materialize. One day, shortly after the girls had entered upon their new duties, a long letter from Aunt Julia arrived. It was addressed to Eudora, who, being at the moment engaged in sewing, handed it to Gladys, with the request that she would read it aloud. It was late afternoon, and the three girls were together in their sitting-room, with the door open between it and the store, so that Edna could be on the watch for customers. Aunt Julia told about her husband's health being improved, the children well, and business matters more satisfactory. After some further general news, the writer proceeded: "By the bye, Eudora, I have something to tell you about your special friend, Mr. Archeret." Edna, happening just then to look at Eudora, saw her color change, and thought her hands trembled, but of this last she was not quite sure. "At least, I supposed him to be a special friend, though I did not say any thing to you about it—indeed, at one time, your uncle and I really thought you were both drifting into something warmer than friendship. How glad I am we were mistaken, and that,

after all, there was nothing in it. Not two weeks after you left, the gentleman began paying attention to a very wealthy German widow, and last week he married her—the general verdict being that he married her fortune, not herself.”

“Why, Eudora!” exclaimed Gladys; “you never told us any thing about this gentleman.”

In some things, Gladys was not so quick in observation as Edna, and even now did not remark the deep flush overspreading Eudora’s countenance—shortly receding, and leaving her of marble pallor.

“As you see,” she said, slowly, “there was nothing to tell.”

But her voice sounded strangely even to Gladys, who looked up quickly; then, as Eudora went calmly on with her sewing, forgot about it the next instant, and went on reading aloud the letter. The moment it was ended, Edna escaped into the kitchen, without again looking at Eudora. There she clenched her fists, and hit at an imaginary foe.

“The wretch!” she said to herself. “To think of any one slighting our beautiful, darling sister! The mercenary, cold-hearted villain! Of course, he heard about father’s failure; and her leaving so suddenly gave him a chance to slip out of the affair before he had fairly committed himself. Because, if they had been engaged, she would of course have told Aunt Julia—and us, too! And that poor dear! Expecting every day a letter from him, and being disappointed! It’s a good thing she found it out in time, though! But here she is—broken-hearted—and Gladys just as bad from some other cause! And, whatever I’m to do

with the two of them, I am sure I don't know! Eudora won't sing her little song to-night—poor, dear, beautiful darling.”

Then she hit out right and left, harder than ever, with some vague wish that the head of her victim were somewhere within reach; thereby exhibiting a decided lack of a meek and lowly spirit!

“What in the world are you about, Edna?” exclaimed Gladys, coming suddenly in upon her. “Are you crazy, or what is the matter?”

“Only a little ebullition of feeling,” replied Edna, calming down at once. She had no intention of betraying Eudora, knowing instinctively that the trouble would be harder to bear if suspected by her sister, and that pity at such a moment would be well-nigh unbearable. Edna was brusque and outspoken, often speaking indiscreetly in her thoughtless haste, but in certain matters she had more delicacy of perception than even Gladys.

“And may I ask what brought about this ebullition?” inquired her sister.

“Yes, you may *ask*, if you think it worth while,” replied Edna, saucily, “but you won't get any answer.”

And there the matter dropped, for Gladys, with her usual indifference, thought nothing more about it.

And did Eudora sing her little song that night? She did indeed. But, let it be confessed, the tears were falling fast as she said it, and though she knew in her heart that goodness and mercy had followed her all this day, even to its sad conclusion, yet the cloudy side of the pillar had its face turned towards

her, and she could not yet see through the gloom to the glory on the other side. She remembered once during her sojourn with those Christian friends to whom she owed so much, their giving counsel to one who came to them in great distress of mind. "You say that the gladness of earth has gone from you forever. Well, now, begin and say to yourself—patiently, persistently, whenever the thought comes by night or by day—'I am glad in the Lord, I am glad in the Lord.'" "But I am not glad in anything or in anyway," the person replied, "and it seems a cruel mockery to say it." "This sorrow has not changed your relations to your Lord," they said. "In your innermost being, you do still rejoice in Him, although this present cloud of sorrow is so dense that it covers all the sunshine of your sky. And yet the sunshine is really there; you are only declaring what you know to be true, though you do not now feel it."

And Eudora remembered hearing them say how that, two or three weeks after, the person came to them with a radiant face, which alone told the story. "For long days together I went about, with a heart like lead; and I said the words, with a lump in my throat, and with fast-falling tears—said them night and day—patiently, persistently, despairingly. Suddenly, one day, the light streamed through, the burden rolled away, and the very peace of God has come into my heart to abide there, I verily believe, forever."

Then Eudora remembered what she herself had said to Edna only a few days previously, when the latter had been in somewhat of a complaining, grumbling mood. "Begin by giving thanks for everything, little

sister, and you will soon find everything to give thanks for."

Was there no matter of thanksgiving here? Yes, even to human vision. Nothing had definitely passed between them—how much harder then would the trial have been! How good that she had been saved from the fate of having actually joined her life to one whom, all too late, she would have found unworthy! And so she then and there began to thank her Lord; and with thanksgiving on her lips she fell asleep. The morning light indeed dawned coldly and drearily for her waking; the spring of hope that had hitherto made duty wear the guise of pleasure had broken, and her walk was now on stony ground; but her feet were shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and no unnecessary hurt would be hers. Calm was her countenance when she joined her sisters, but Edna noticed that its radiance had departed and that her steps were slow and weary. Gladys' mood was now so habitually a dreamy one that she seldom noticed anything, yet for a moment at the breakfast table Eudora's lack of animation seemed to strike her, and she asked her if she felt well. "Quite well, thank you," was the reply, and Gladys was satisfied. Not so Edna. Far rather would she have seen her sister with tearful eyes and outspoken grief than with that calm, pale quiet—so white, so still.

"No, she did not sing her little song last night," she decided. "She could not, if she feels like that."

Suddenly Eudora looked up, and catching Edna's eyes fixed upon her with a peculiar expression, she felt, with a pang, that her secret was at least sus-

pected. Realizing how much this would add to her burden, she roused herself to enter into conversation, even relating some amusing details of her German adventures; so that, by the time breakfast was over, Edna began to feel that perhaps she had been mistaken, and that her imagination had led her into serious error. Still, as day after day passed, and Eudora's heart-happy looks had not returned, though her countenance was calm as ever, Edna took back her former opinion to a certain extent, feeling sure that some damage had been done, though perhaps not so much as she at first had feared.

Meanwhile, outwardly all was prosperous. Gladys' class now numbered six, and she was also giving drawing lessons to Gabrielle. The little store was becoming well known in the neighborhood. Many customers were attracted at first from curiosity to see the brave young girls who had so suddenly been plunged from affluence into dire poverty. In many cases, interest took the place of curiosity, and Edna felt that she was rapidly making friends—at least acquaintances, who might one day become friends. Then Eudora's services were coming more and more into requisition as her value became known. People began to find out that their children's clothes were so skillfully repaired, and even turned and altered, that the expense of having her was more than made up by the fewer clothes needed. Often she would spend a whole day in one family; and finally all her days were employed with the exception of Saturday, which she reserved for the use of her own household. Her mission class increased from week to week, so much



so that the problem arose how to accommodate them all in that little room. Here her faithful assistant, Gabrielle, came to the rescue. "Miss Eudora," she said, on one of the nights upon which she was still awake when her friend came over, "I have a splendid plan in my head."

"Have you, dear? May I ask what it is?"

"Why you know, Miss Eudora, that our mission-class is getting too large to hold in that tiny room—it's a very nice room," Gabrielle hastened to add, fearful of hurting her friend's feelings—she was improving in this direction—"but you know it *is* small."

"Yes," assented Eudora, "there is no denying that fact; and I have been thinking what we could do about it. I don't like to turn any of those poor children away, and yet—"

"You won't," interrupted Gabrielle, gleefully. "You won't have to turn any away! We can take a whole lot more, too! There's a room that was built on one side of the barn for the coachman to sleep in; but it has been used instead for a sort of lumber-room, and it's full of tools and boxes and trunks, and—O all sorts of trash. Well, to-day I told Grandma what a time we had to crowd those children in, and I asked her if we couldn't have that room. She went right out to look at it, and she said all those things could be put into the harness-room next the stable. She will have it attended to to-morrow, she said, and have it all cleaned out, and O, won't it be nice?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Eudora. "It is very kind of your Grandma to take so much trouble about it, and I have no doubt it will be just the thing."

There was a pause. "Miss Eudora." "Yes, Gabrielle."

"You don't seem so happy about it as I thought you would be."

"Don't I, dear? But I *am* pleased, and very grateful to my little assistant for taking so much interest and trouble in the matter." Another pause.

"Miss Eudora, you don't seem so—so—jolly as you used to be."

Eudora was somewhat startled and surprised; she had not given Gabrielle credit for being of an observing nature, and had had no idea that any change in her appearance or manner had been noticed by the child. So it was perhaps with a little vexation that she replied, "Gabrielle, you had better go to sleep, instead of lying there imagining things about people." But even as she said the words, her conscience rebuked her for even intimating that there was no truth in the little girl's remarks.

"O but, Miss Eudora, it's not imagination—at least, I did not imagine it. I heard Grandma say so to Grandpa the other day. She said you looked pale and unspirited, and that now there—"

"Gabrielle," interposed Eudora firmly, "it is very wrong to repeat to persons anything you hear said of them, if they are not intended to know it. So don't do it again, dear. And as to me, I have had a good deal to try me of late, and am not so jolly—as you express it—as I used to be. But that will pass away, and I shall be like myself again. And in the meantime, Gabrielle, don't speak of this to anyone. I am

sure, if I ask this of you, I can trust you to do as I wish."

"Indeed you can, Miss Eudora. I'll never say a single word to anyone, not even to Grandma."

"Thank you, dear. And now good night, and pleasant dreams."



## CHAPTER XII.

The next day, when Eudora returned from her duties, Gabrielle ran over, begging her to come and see how she liked their new mission room. Logan was with her, and nothing would do him but that Gladys must come too; so both accompanied the children. With a look of triumph, Gabrielle threw open the door, then stepped back while the girls went in; and she and Logan followed to watch the effect.

"Why, this is charming!" exclaimed Eudora. "I am indeed surprised, Gabrielle!"

"I should think so!" said Gladys. "It is quite nice enough to live in."

"That's what I said," laughed Gabrielle jumping up and down in delight. "I never guessed myself it would be so nice!"

"What are you so happy about, little daughter?" said a voice behind them; and the girls turned to greet Mr. Ernest, who stood in the doorway.

"O papa!" exclaimed Gabrielle, springing to his side. "Isn't this a lovely room for our class? Miss Eudora's class and mine, you know—our mission class."

"Indeed, I was not aware of the fact that Miss Grayston and yourself were in partnership in a benevolent scheme," replied the gentleman with his usual grave smile. "I should have supposed that my

little daughter needed instruction herself instead of her teaching others."

"O, but papa, I don't teach; I help sing, and give around crackers and such things, you know. And I *am* taught myself, for I go to Sunday School in the morning; and then I learn a great deal from what Miss Eudora teaches the children. And O papa, they're so funny, some of them! They did not know anything when they first came, and now some of them are getting to know a good deal. You must come and listen some day, and then you'll see for yourself."

"If Miss Grayston will second your kind invitation, little daughter, I shall be most happy to accept."

And he bent his dark eyes inquiringly upon Eudora, who laughingly evaded the question, and turned all her attention to examination of the room. A small table in the center, several wooden benches against the walls, with two chairs for the teachers—a blackboard, pretty white muslin curtains draped at the two windows, and a wide strip of carpet across the middle of the floor, completed the furnishings.

"It is indeed a charming room," said Eudora. "We must try to fill it, Gabrielle."

Logan had been looking on with a dissatisfied air after the first few minutes.

"What is the matter, little man?" asked his father, taking him up in his arms. "Does this fine apartment not meet with your approval?"

"Why, papa—*we're* awfully crowded in our room over there, and nobody gives *us* a room to have our lessons in—and—and—I don't like it!" he added with a burst of tears.

"Well, little son, neither would papa like it," said his father, kissing the wet cheeks. "And—why, Miss Grayston, why cannot this room do for you likewise—since the mission class only occupies it on Sunday?"

"Indeed, it would do very well, Mr. Warringsford, I am sure. I had thought of it just before Logan spoke. But possibly Mrs. Warringsford may not like to have the children tramping daily through her grounds."

"Indeed, she has no objection," said that lady, who just now entered; "to their going through the very small part of the grounds which alone would be necessary. You know, Miss Gladys, they can enter your back gate as hitherto, and come through the side path, which, as you see, is only a short distance from this room. No, I am not at all afraid of *your* scholars; but Gabrielle must keep guard that no mischief is done by hers"—

"Grandma!" remonstrated the little girl, "you don't know how well they are getting to behave. They wouldn't touch a flower or do a bit of mischief for the world!"

Eudora was by no means so sure; but she inwardly resolved that she would take good care no harm should be done.

"I was intending," said Mrs. Warringsford, "to propose this plan to you, knowing how crowded you must be. Besides, a lady has this moment left me who called to ask if I thought you would be willing to take girls. She has two, of five and seven years, whom she would like to send, and will call on you tomorrow in regard to the matter. They are very nice

children, and now that want of room is no obstacle, I would advise your giving her an affirmative answer."

"If you think I can manage so many," began Gladys, doubtfully, "I should, of course, be glad"—

"O yes, Miss Gladys, please take them," interposed Logan, who had been listening attentively to the conversation. "I like girls, I do—and they like me too, they do."

All laughed, and Mr. Ernest remarked: "I should think that would settle the matter, Miss Grayston. There is surely nothing to be said after that."

"I suppose not," said Gladys, smiling. "I can at least try them, and if I do not succeed, I can give them up, I suppose. What do you think, Eudora?"

"I should certainly try them, Gladys. And do not have any idea of failure. There is no reason you should not succeed, I am sure."

And so the matter was settled, and on the following Monday, Gladys had eight in her class. It was rather difficult at first to manage. The children were at different stages in their progress, and it was not an easy matter for an inexperienced person to arrange so that each child should get the proper amount of instruction.

At first, Gladys felt discouraged, and at the end of the second day she said to Eudora: "I do believe I shall have to give up. I am really afraid they will not learn anything. While I am teaching one class, the other children are whispering or carrying on in some way or other; and I do not feel as if I were doing them justice. I don't want to take money for

nothing, or to feel that they would be doing better somewhere else; and I am afraid they would."

"All you need is experience," replied her sister. "At least I think so. You might give those who are not reciting something to write or draw on their slates or on the blackboard. And if they persisted in talking or disturbing the others, I should think you might stand them up in a corner, or some such slight punishment; probably you would not have to do it often."

"But I do so dislike having to punish," said Gladys.

"Yes, it is not pleasant, but sometimes necessary." Eudora had had some experience of the kind with her mission class. "Besides, Gladys, you cannot expect to go on smoothly and swimmingly from the very first, you know. Wise people say that real success in anything involves previous failure, and that failure is the price paid for ultimate success."

"Perhaps so," said Gladys. "I shall keep on for the present, but"—

She sighed wearily as she turned away. And Eudora well knew that her sister's trouble, whatever it might be, had taken the spring of happiness from her work, and made the road extremely hard. She knew—because it was now her own experience, and she felt a tenderness towards Gladys, and a sympathy for her, which would formerly have been impossible.

One night about this time, Eudora had been asleep for two or three hours, when she was roused with a start by the ringing of the bell in her room. She sprang up in terror, for she knew that it would not be rung without urgent cause. Hastily throwing on her dressing-gown and shoes, and without reflecting either



into what danger she might be running, or remembering Mrs. Warringsford's strict injunctions to arouse the family in such a case, she unlocked the side door, and ran over with a beating heart. The door was opened by Edna, who looked tearful and frightened.

"Hush!" she said, in a low trembling voice. "She does not know I rang the bell, and she is asleep. But O, Eudora, she was going on so in her sleep, that I just could not stand it any longer, and had to ring the bell. But I was sorry the moment I did it, for I knew how frightened you would be."

Eudora sat down quickly, for she felt too faint to stand. It was better than she had feared in one way, for she had imagined that the house had been entered, or an entrance attempted. Yet in another way, it was worse. She had so hoped that Gladys was getting over her trouble, for she had seemed much calmer of late. But now?

"What did she say, Edna? Was she talking in her sleep?"

"Yes, talking wildly, and tossing her arms about. And just before I rang, she gave a scream—O, it was dreadful! I never saw her so before—not so bad, at least, though she often talks in her sleep."

Just then, Gladys called Edna, and the latter hastened in, begging Eudora not to let Gladys know she was there.

"Why, Edna!" said Gladys in her own natural tone. "Where have you been? I awoke and was quite frightened not to find you."

"I was only in the other room," replied Edna, in as careless a tone as possible.

"I have had such a terrible dream," said Gladys. "I feel all shaken up. But do come to bed, Edna, and I shall get to sleep again—without dreaming this time, I hope."

"I shall be here directly, Gladys." Then slipping back to Eudora and closing the door behind her, she whispered, "she is all right now, Eudora. How sorry I am you were so frightened. But I hardly realized that she was really asleep. It is all right now."

"Well, good night, dear. I must run back, for in my fright and haste, I left the side door open—otherwise I would sleep on the sofa. But I think you will not be frightened again to-night, and to-morrow we will see what is best to be done."

An affectionate good-night, then Edna waited at the door until Eudora was safely in, and after fastening all securely once more, she returned to Gladys.

No one had heard Eudora leave the house. All was dead silence as she bolted the door and regained her room. For a long time she lay awake considering what was best to be done. Edna was rather young to have such a nightly anxiety as would henceforth be hers, in view of a possible recurrence of the trouble. What could be done? If she should propose to change places with Edna, Gladys might suspect something, and that would only add to her trouble. However, it seemed the only thing to be done, as far as she could now see. If there were any better plan, she was sure it would be suggested to her, as she had put this, with everything else that concerned her, into the hands of her unerring Guide and Leader.

The following morning, Edna looked pale and dis-

pirited, Gladys about as usual; but with her large amount of self-control, it was difficult to tell to how much restraint she was subjecting her feelings. Conversation went on as usual at the table. Suddenly Edna exclaimed:

"Eudora, why cannot you and I change places for awhile! Turn about is fair play, you know, and I think I should like to go there for the present, if you and Mrs. Warringsford have no objection."

Thus relieved from the necessity of deciding the matter for herself, Eudora replied:

"I think it would be a very good plan, Edna. I had thought of it myself—if Gladys will consent to the change of partners."

"I have certainly no objection," replied Gladys. But she gave a rather doubtful glance at both girls. "I believe I screamed last night, for I had frightful dreams. Did you hear me, Edna?"

"Yes," replied her sister, scarcely knowing what to say. "What did you dream, Gladys?"

"O, don't ask me." And Gladys turned so pale, that Edna hastily changed the subject, to which no further allusion was made during breakfast.

This was Eudora's day for being with Mrs. Warringsford; she therefore took the opportunity for speaking of the proposed change. Mrs. Warringsford looked grave.

"I have no positive objection, my dear; but Gabrielle will be greatly disappointed, for she has become so much attached to you. May I ask if you have any special reason for the change?"

Eudora hesitated. She had not intended saying any-

thing as to causes, but now it seemed best that she should confide, to a certain extent, in this judicious friend. She therefore replied:

"I have a reason, Mrs. Warringsford. Gladys has not seemed well for some time past, and of late has been troubled in her sleep. This has made Edna rather nervous, so I thought it best that I should stay for the present with Gladys, and have Edna come here—that is, if you are perfectly willing."

"Certainly, my dear, since you have good reason for the change. Gabrielle will feel a little disappointed at first, but she will soon become accustomed to Edna. Besides, I hope you will shortly return to us. Yes, I have noticed for some time that Miss Gladys was looking pale and depressed. You do not consider it anything serious, I hope, my dear?"

"I hardly know, Mrs. Warringsford. Something has evidently happened to distress her, and I do not like to force her confidence. She had seemed better of late, and I had begun to hope she was getting over the trouble, but—"

Eudora's eyes were full of tears, which she had hard work to keep from overflowing.

"Well, now, my dear," said Mrs. Warringsford, in her kind, sympathetic way, "I think you may have made a mistake in not speaking to your sister in regard to the matter. Possibly it might be a great relief for her to confide her trouble to you. You might be able to make her see that it is not so bad as she fancies. Of course, I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that this would be your best plan."

"Perhaps so," said Eudora, thoughtfully. "I can

at least make the effort. My speaking to you on the subject has been such a relief to me that possibly it might be the same to her. Thank you so much, Mrs. Warringsford, for your kind advice and interest. It makes everything so much easier for me."

"My dear, I hope you will always feel that you can come to me at any time, and make me a sharer in your anxieties and griefs—of your joys, also, as you would to your own mother, had she lived. I lost a daughter of nearly your age, and at times there is something about you reminding me of her. So you see you have a claim upon me, aside from any ordinary friendship."

She kissed Endora as she finished speaking, and the young girl felt the immense relief of having a confidential, trustworthy friend.

## CHAPTER XIII.

An opportunity occurred that very night of speaking to Gladys. Edna had gone over early, as Mrs. Warringsford had sent word that Gabrielle begged she would come and see some magic-lantern pictures their father was to exhibit in the back parlor about seven o'clock. The two girls were together in the sitting-room, after their early combination dinner and tea. The lamp was lighted in the adjoining room, with the door open between, but both preferred to sit for awhile in the semi-darkness, and chat.

"I am so glad," began Gladys, "that Edna has a chance to have a little amusement. She has been so hard at work of late, and I began to think she was getting thin. I saw you looking at her this morning as if you noticed a change in her."

"She certainly looked badly to-day," replied Eudora. "But"—she hesitated, then went on more firmly—"dear Gladys, has it not occurred to you that she might be feeling a little anxious about a certain sister of hers?"

"About me?" Gladys flushed deeply. "Why should she"—

Unaccustomed to insincerity, she paused abruptly. There was an awkward pause, then Gladys resumed:

"Yes, I know that I have not been looking well of late—but, for that matter, Eudora, neither have you."

"That is true, Gladys, I also have had some trouble; but mine is vanishing, while yours"—

Another pause, during which Eudora opened her heart to receive the wisdom which was waiting to be poured therein.

"Gladys, dear, I am going to tell you all about my trial, though I once thought no one should ever know it; because it was not a full-fledged trouble, you see, and might have been much worse."

It was terribly hard for Eudora thus to open her heart to any one in regard to this affair, owing to its peculiar nature. It was humbling to her pride, of which she had her share, though never so much as Gladys. But if it might prove of any assistance to this dearly-loved sister—which her heaven-born instinct told her would be the case—she must cast aside all selfish considerations. She told it all—the little details she had thought would never pass her lips; and Gladys listened with absorbed interest to the very end. Then she drew a long breath.

"O Eudora, how good of you to tell me! And I never guessed anything. Only, that day the letter came, it struck me you looked pale, and for a moment I wondered whether you really had cared. But I was so taken up with my own sorrows that I selfishly thought no more about you. Poor, dear girl! It was too bad! It was just a shame!"

"O no," said Eudora, smiling brightly. "It was hard at first, and all looked dark. But, Gladys, the light has come. Not in a sudden flash, but gradually—as a clear morning follows the slow advancing dawn. I *knew* all along that it was for the best—since *all* things work for good; but now I so clearly see and

feel it, and its every shadow has passed away forever !”

There was a long pause.

“I am very glad, dear Eudora.” Gladys could not be demonstrative like Edna, but Eudora knew the deep feeling underlying her words. “Eudora”—she paused, flushed, turned pale again. “You have done me good—I am very much better than I was before we had this conversation. But will you be seriously vexed with me if I still think it best not to tell you what troubles me? Perhaps I may some day. If it should become unbearable, I promise you I will. But my judgment tells me that just now I had better be silent. It is not of such a nature as yours, Eudora—if it were you should know it in a minute, for I do believe this sorrow has melted all my pride away. But you must trust me, and believe it is best you should not know it—at least at present. I thought it would be intolerable to have any one even suspect I was in deep trouble. But I am so relieved—so much lighter hearted—and I thank you more than I can tell. Please, please, don’t be vexed with me.”

“Certainly not, dear Gladys. You have a perfect right to do as you think best in the matter. I depend on your promise to tell me when you feel that you can not bear it alone; and until then I am satisfied, knowing that as for me, so for you, the light is only waiting to be revealed.”

Gladys shook her head.

“Not as it has for you, Dorrie”—a pet name Gladys had not used for years. “Doubtless time will blunt the keenness of the suffering, and I shall be calm once



more ; but light will never dawn for me as it has for you."

"O, but it will, dear Gladys," said Eudora, brightly, "I am quite a prophet at times, and I prophesy that before very long you will be happier than you *now* believe possible."

Then Eudora wisely changed the subject, and Gladys retired to rest that night, though still sad, yet with a lighter heart than had been the case since the first of her sorrow.

Meantime, Edna was having a charming time. Gabrielle at first felt much disappointed upon finding that her dear Miss Eudora was not to be her nightly companion for the present ; but Edna was so bright, so full of life and spirits, entering into the fun with as keen a zest as the children, that the little girl was speedily reconciled to the change. Mr. Ernest was the exhibitor, and unbent as far as his reserved nature would allow. His gravity, however, was his chief attraction in Edna's eyes.

"He is so aristocratic," she thought again and again. "I do *not* think jolly men are half so interesting."

It is to be feared poor Mr. Crescent was in her mind.

When bedtime came, Gabrielle—who was allowed to sit up until half-past nine—had decided, with the quick facility of childhood, that Miss Edna was really just about as nice as Miss Eudora.

Next morning, Edna encountered two bright faces at the breakfast table. Eudora had usually worn a cheerful air, and had lately by degrees been recovering the radiant look of former days; but here was the

first happy look on Gladys' countenance since that mysterious event.

"Well," she exclaimed, "the change has done us all good! O girls, you don't know what a lovely time I had! Everything was delightful, and they were all so kind and nice!"

"I am glad you had a happy time, dear," said Eudora. "And you shall stay there for the present at any rate—perhaps altogether."

Edna clapped her hands. She was still scarcely more than a child, and the late strain had been hard to bear. Now the relief was great, and her elastic nature rebounded as soon as the burden was lifted. To see her dear Gladys cheerful once more was of itself happiness enough. The pleasure, too, of the previous night, and the prospect of more, added to her high spirits, so that she felt no lack of anything.

"Now, Edna," said Eudora, when they were washing the dishes together—Gladys had gone to her school-room, having some preparations to make for her scholars—"I have a serious plan to propose to you—I hope it may meet with your approbation."

A cloud overspread Edna's countenance.

"Serious!" she echoed. "O dear! I have had so much seriousness! I did hope I was over it for the present at least."

"Don't be alarmed, little sister! It is serious, but not sad. And I really think you may like it."

"Do tell me quick," said Edna. "I hate to be kept in suspense."

"Well, then, Edna, you know you are only eighteen, and your education is far from completed. In fact,

this is the case with Gladys and myself, though, of course, to a lesser extent."

"I know it," said Edna, "and I often feel badly about it, but you see I can't go to school."

"No, but this is my plan. You have a great deal of time to yourself in the store, now that you are no longer so busy making all those fancy article, as there is quite a stock of them on hand. I therefore propose that at least one hour in the morning, and one in the afternoon, shall be given to your studies, of which I shall mark you out a plan, and you can recite to me every evening before going to Mrs. Warringsford's. How does that suit your ladyship?"

"Well enough," replied Edna, doubtfully. "But what do you want me to study?"

"History for one thing. You might read a portion every day, then write out a synopsis of what you have read, and show it to me in the evening. Then arithmetic. You can begin your algebra again, for I hardly think you were very thorough in it, and do a certain number of problems daily. If you should be puzzled at any time, I can probably help you, as I intend reviewing the book myself of evenings, and am somewhat more advanced in that branch than my little sister. We can begin with these two studies, as I think they were your special bugbears, and it seems best to attack them first. What do you say to my plan?"

"I like it," replied Edna, in the same doubtful tone. "At least I know I ought to do it anyway. For lately I have been considering my educational deficiencies, and feeling that something ought to be done. But I hadn't resolution enough to set myself to work. You

see, there are so many nice books in the store, and the latest magazines, and it is so easy to pick one up in the interval of customers. So I have drifted on and on, with many a prick of conscience, I assure you, and I ought to be delighted that I am forced to make a halt. I don't want to be an ignoramus, and be only attractive while I am young; that's what happens to empty-brained people, and *I will not* be one of them."

"Usually," said Eudora. "But I have met some very interesting people who had almost nothing of what one calls education. They had brains enough to take in a certain kind of knowledge from all about them, and to use it in a practical way—to give out what they had absorbed, in such a manner as to interest others, and to keep themselves constantly in touch with the world around them. But they were people of brains in the first place, and doubtless would have been still more delightful, had the advantages of culture been theirs."

"I suppose so," said Edna. "But, Eudora, you mistake in supposing History to be one of my weak points; I am more backward in Geography, and never seem to remember where places are situated. I don't think I remember dates either, for I am sure Mademoiselle was misty herself regarding them. I once asked her some date that anybody ought to know—I forget now what it was—perhaps the Declaration of Independence—and she hesitated, then told me to look it up myself. I forgot all about it until the evening, when she reminded me of it, and when I said I had forgotten to hunt it up, she told me what it was, and I felt sure she had forgotten it herself."

Eudora laughed, then said, "never mind about Mademoiselle now. She was very good in a great many ways, and we are much indebted to her, but she was of a literary and poetic, rather than of a scientific turn of mind, and to one of that nature, exactness in anything is difficult. You are precisely the opposite, and should now make good progress in the studies you then neglected; so I shall expect wonders from you. Gladys and I intend reading History, and studying other things of evenings after you have gone to Mrs. Warringsford's; I think people can often do better work after they are grown up than earlier in life, though of course the more thorough the earlier preparation, the easier the after work will be."

"Well," said Edna, with a sigh, "I suppose I shall have to give up those delightful stories, and go back to every-day-ness, and humdrum-ness, and the mustiness of antiquity."

"I certainly would advise your giving them up in the morning. In fact, if you would give them up altogether for the present at any rate, until you get into the habit of study, it might be best."

"All right," said Edna, firmly. "I shall give them up for a month any way, and see what comes of it. Eudora, I want to ask you something—though maybe you won't like it; but I do so want to know." Edna paused, looking inquiringly at her sister, who smilingly replied: "Go on and ask your question, Edna; I think you can safely do so."

"Well, then, what I want to know is, have you been singing your little song of late?"

Eudora flushed deeply, but answered calmly: "Yes, dear, every night as usual. Why do you ask?"

"O, well," said Edna, mentally blaming herself for indiscretion, "I only thought perhaps you hadn't."

She was turning away when Eudora stopped her. "Wait a moment, Edna. I think I know why you asked me. You have doubtless noticed that of late I have not been in the best of spirits. That is true. I had what I considered good cause for being sad. But I knew surely that my real causes for thanksgiving were just what they had ever been, so I thanked God for the blessings which I could not see so clearly as before, but which I believed in with all my heart. And now, Edna, the light has come—the sight has come; and more clearly than ever do I see the goodness and mercy which have followed me every step of the way, and will follow me even to the end."

The tears were in Edna's eyes, but she tried to hide her emotion by saying lightly: "It's lovely, of course, to be able to feel so. But I think I should get tired of saying prayers all the time."

Then Eudora quoted, smilingly:

"To talk with God, no breath is lost;

Talk on, talk on.

To walk with God, no strength is lost;

Walk on, walk on."

"But here are the dishes all done, and it is about time for you and me to prepare for our several duties."

"Please wait a minute, Eudora. I want to ask you something more. How does Gladys happen to look so cheerful all at once? Has she quite got over her

trouble, or did you use some magic to make her forget it?"

"Only love's magic, little sister. She is cheered and relieved to a certain extent; but the sorrow is still there, and we must wait patiently until it is removed."

Yes, the sorrow was still there, and now and then Gladys would fall back into her gloomy moods, or suddenly *remember*, with a shock of surprise or terror. But the intervals of cheerfulness were longer, her sleep became less troubled, and, on the whole, there was improvement.



## CHAPTER XIV.

And so the winter passed, and April was at hand. Most of the time, their little kitchen fire had been a real necessity in order to keep comfortably warm, at least of mornings and evenings, on sunny days; on rainy days it was kept constantly going. Then the communicating doors were left open, and some degree of warmth penetrated to the adjoining rooms. Edna tried to imagine that it warmed even the store, but after taking two severe colds, she consented to employ the customary California heat-imparter—a large lamp inclosed in a reflector—which really threw out more heat than one who has not tried it would suppose. On unusually chilly days, she would sometimes warm a thick board in the oven, and lay it under her feet as she sat at her studies, and also put a shawl or cape around her shoulders. But the rainy days were few and far between, and the sunny days many and glorious; so that life, as far as climate was concerned, was not at all hard to bear.

One day, late in the afternoon, as the girls were sitting down to dinner, Mr. Crescent walked in.

"Do not let me disturb you, young ladies. Perhaps you will kindly allow me to join you in a cup of tea?"

Of course he had a warm welcome, especially from Eudora and Edna. Gladys, after her usual quiet courteous greeting, said not a word, although Mr. Crescent's inquiring looks were chiefly in her direction.

"I have come this evening for a particular pur-



pose," he said, after he had been supplied with tea and crackers, refusing more substantial nourishment. "It is a considerable time since our Long Beach excursion, and another expedition is now in order, according to my idea—I hope also to yours."

Edna looked delighted.

"Of course it is!" she said. "Why don't you say so, girls?"

"I am sure it would be delightful," said Eudora, while Gladys murmured something to the same effect.

"Well, then, hear my plan," said Mr. Crescent. "You have been to the coast, but not to the cañon, and as this is the season for wild flowers, I want you to see them in all their beauty. There is also a business side to the question. You can gather a quantity of the different varieties, and my friend, Mrs. Parlot, has offered to instruct you in the art of pressing and arranging them, so that you will have some further attractions to allure the tourist to our little store. Mrs. Parlot is the same kind friend who gave me information regarding the sea-mosses and shells."

"How lovely!" exclaimed Edna. "I have always wanted to know how to arrange flowers scientifically. You can add the artistic touches, Gladys."

"Mrs. Parlot is very kind to take so much trouble for strangers," said Gladys, somewhat stiffly. "But I do not see that we have any claim—"

She paused, with a feeling that her intended speech was uncalled-for and out of place.

"She will not long be a stranger, when you have once met her," said Mr. Crescent, somewhat cast down.

"She makes every one feel at home with her at once,





SCENE AT LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

and takes a real enjoyment in helping all who need her help."

He paused for a moment, during which Gladys had an uncomfortable feeling that she had better have remained silent. Then he resumed, more cheerfully:

"I have a special wish that you should all see the Santiago Cañon. It is rather far—some forty or fifty miles off—but we go by rail most of the way, and can hire some kind of a conveyance for the remaining distance. Mrs. Warringsford declines being of the party, as she fears the fatigue may be too much for her, but Mrs. Parlot will be delighted to act as chaperon, and will explain the pressing process on the spot. Mr. Ernest will also join us, and Gabrielle, at her own earnest request. I flatter myself that this will make a charming party. I trust it also meets your united approbation."

It was Eudora who took upon herself to answer for all, as Gladys did not seem disposed to speak.

"Indeed, I am sure it would be most charming, Mr. Crescent, and you are extremely kind to plan the pleasure for us, but this time there are really serious difficulties in the way. I could not well break any of my engagements, and Gladys could hardly dismiss her class, so neither of us could take Edna's place in the store, which I believe, as a member of the firm, you do not approve of closing."

"Permit me to arrange the matter, Miss Eudora. In fact, it is already arranged in my own mind. The expedition is planned for Saturday next; therefore, your difficulty, and Miss Gladys's, are disposed of. As to Miss Edna"—he paused and looked at her anxious

face with a twinkle in his eye. "We will cut the Gordian knot of this special difficulty with a single blow of the sword. We shall close the store for the day!"

"O!" exclaimed Edna, half relieved, and half in doubt. "But I thought you did not approve of that—when we went to Long Beach, you know."

"That was different, Miss Edna. We had only commenced business then, and to establish a character for dependableness is essential to success. That character is now established. Besides, next Saturday is a special holiday of some kind—I did not learn exactly what it is—but it is some celebration outside the city, so that Los Angeles will be comparatively deserted, and possibly you might not have a single customer the entire day. So, Miss Edna, you shall have your holiday, and we will close the store!"

Edna clasped her hands with a sigh of satisfaction. "How perfectly lovely!" she said; she was a modern young lady, and dealt in superlatives. "To think we can all go, and nobody is left behind to spoil the pleasure of others!"

Each for her own special reason, Gladys and Eudora would both have preferred remaining at home. But each disliked disappointing the others—besides, their reasons were not such as could be given. So they smilingly accepted the invitation with thanks, and Mr. Crescent and Edna were radiant.

"This time we must take provisions," said Mr. Crescent, "as there is nothing to be had in the mountains. Mr. Ernest, who unites with me in the affair, attends to that part. He will take their butler to

manage the hamper and attend to the commissary department in general; so all is comfortably arranged. I forgot to mention that Mrs. Parlot has a fourteen-year-old son, who accompanies his mother—a very nice boy, by the way. He will be a pleasant companion for Gabrielle, with whom he is already acquainted, and who greatly admires him; but I fear the admiration is hardly reciprocated. Lloyd is, however, a gentlemanly lad, and treats her with kindly politeness.”

“Suppose it rains,” suggested Edna.

“It is not likely to do that, Miss Edna, so late in the season, though it is possible until early May. But, if it should rain, it is extremely unlikely that it would be more than a shower—in which case we could retreat to our carriage while it lasted. We do not take rain into account when planning expeditions in these regions; if it should come, it will be only one of the exceptions which prove the rule.”

“How nice,” said Edna. “We were always looking out for storms at home.”

“Let me see,” said Mr. Crescent, “this is Wednesday. Then on Saturday next, young ladies, if you will kindly be in readiness by 7 A. M., Mrs. Warringsford’s carriage will be at the door to convey you and Gabrielle to the depot, where Mr. Ernest and myself will be awaiting you—also, Mrs. Parlot and her son, I presume. We leave this time by the Santa Fé depot, instead of the Arcade, as when we went to Long Beach.”

Some general conversation followed; then the gentleman took his departure.

Saturday dawned clear and bright ; with that fine crispiness in the air characteristic of a Spring morning in those regions. Edna looked into the store after she was dressed ; then closed and fastened the door between it and the adjoining room.

"Good-bye, old store!" she said, gayly. "I'm a lady to-day. A lady of leisure, about to step into my carriage, and forget your existence for the next twenty-four hours at any rate! You're well enough in your way, but I would not die of grief if I should never see your face again. I wouldn't indeed! Good-bye to you, old store!"

"Nonsense, Edna," said Gladys, who overheard the speech. "I hope you are a lady as much in the store as out of it. And you had better not speak so disrespectfully of what has largely contributed to our living. But you are so happy you scarcely know what you are saying, do you, Ducksie?"

It was long since Edna had heard her sister use the old pet name, and taking it as a harbinger of returning spirits, she felt her cup of happiness full indeed.

Soon the carriage appeared, with Gabrielle inside, and of course overflowing with life and fun. The butler sat beside the coachman, feeling the dignity of his position, and doing his best to imitate his companion's stiff straightness. Mrs. Warringsford came down to the gate to see them off, and to give final directions to Gabrielle regarding strict observance of her elders' commands. Good-byes, and many wishes for a happy day—then they were off.

A fifteen minutes' drive brought them to the fine,

flower-surrounded Santa Fé depot, where the gentlemen awaited them, coming forward to assist them from the carriage. In the waiting-room were Mrs. Parlot and her handsome son, whom Gabrielle delightedly greeted—for she had not known of his being one of the party. Mrs. Parlot was a short, stout, little lady, precisely the opposite of what the girls had imagined—though for what reason, they could not have told. She had twinkling blue eyes, a snub nose, merry, laughing countenance—"not a particle of style about her, and homely too," decided Gladys on the spot. Decided it with a feeling of—yes, let it be confessed—a feeling of satisfaction which she would have scorned to confess even to herself, considering such pettiness as unworthy of a lady, besides being unable to conceive of any reason why Mrs. Parlot's appearance should affect her in any possible manner!

The boy was entirely different from his mother—"resembles his father who died long ago," Mr. Crescent had informed them. He had large, dreamy brown eyes, olive complexion and dark, curly hair—"just as sweet as can be," Gabrielle had confided to Edna in an aside, while awaiting their train.

Mrs. Parlot was the kind of woman who makes another woman feel almost instantly at ease in her presence; and it was not long before all the girls felt as though they had known her for an indefinite period. Any idea they might have had, that a stranger's presence would mar their enjoyment, and be a disagreeable restraint, vanished even before the train arrived, and they started on their journey with the pleasant feeling of congeniality all around. Well,



not quite all round. Mr. Ernest's reserve was what it had ever been ; though melting now and then, to a more or less extent, it was still there, surrounding him as by an impenetrable mist—indefinable as mist, and yet as really to be felt—dampening to a greater or lesser degree, according to the susceptibility of temperament, the spirits of those about him. The three girls regarded him with very different eyes.

"I certainly do not admire him," thought Gladys, as she contrasted him with another person, his direct opposite. "He is cold as an iceberg—really makes me feel chilly."

"What an admirable father he makes," thought Eudora, who was training herself to see the best in everything. "How perfectly devoted he is to those children, and how dearly they love him."

While Edna thought for perhaps the twentieth time, "how charmingly aristocratic he is—so interesting, so polite, such a perfect gentleman ! He is just the nicest man I ever met in all my life !"

About thirty miles inland by rail from Los Angeles, they stopped at a small town, where the ladies waited at the station while the gentlemen went in search of a vehicle. In about half an hour they returned with a small, shabby hotel omnibus, that being the only obtainable conveyance ; the others being off on picnics in various directions.

"I am sorry, ladies," said Mr. Crescent, "but this is really the best we can do for you, and we had some difficulty in securing even this sorry affair. However, it is cushioned, the springs are fairly good, and it has the merit of affording us ample room."

While speaking, Mr. Crescent was handing in the ladies—then the gentlemen followed, the butler with his hamper took his seat beside the driver, and they were off.

"What a beautiful little town," said Mrs. Parlot, as they passed by the plaza, situated about the center of the place, its borders one mass of brilliant flowers, and beds of grass plots here and there, kept green and luxuriant by the overflowing basin of the fountain, whose sparkling waters were seen from quite a distance, "I do think Southern California excels in its numerous picturesque towns and villages. Look at these cosy, comfortable cottages! And there are some pretty villas—and, actually, an imposing hotel building! One would not suppose there would be patronage in such a small place to warrant so large a structure."

"There are numerous commercial travelers stopping over night at even these small towns," said Mr. Crescent. "Then occasionally a family traveling in search of health makes a longer or shorter stay. Then many of the well-to-do families in the town find it convenient to take at least their dinner at the hotel—the price for meals being low enough to make it worth their while, and help of any kind being difficult to procure. By one means or other they usually make then pay, to at least a moderate extent. Money is decidedly scarce in these small places."

Soon they were passing long shady avenues (lined on either side with graceful pepper-trees) or rows of tall eucalyptus or evergreens of various description.

Sometimes they passed lemon orchards, some of the yellow fruit still hanging upon the branches—again orange orchards where the snowy blossoms shed delightful perfume and contrasted with the bright colors of the ripe fruit which here and there had been left ungathered. Hedges of clipped evergreens intertwined oftentimes with red geraniums were numerous. Soon they entered upon the open plains, no less interesting in their way—more so indeed, as being a less accustomed sight. Queer forms of cacti were here in abundance on either side; farther on they passed through rocks and hills, where rabbits and squirrels darted across the road, disappearing into their holes as the sound of wheels startled them—or lizards ran to one side; and once a butcher-bird rose from the ground directly in front of them and soared away with a snake dangling from his bill.

"He'll eat all he can of it," said Mr. Crescent; "then with his sharp bill, he will make a hole in a tree where he will secure his victim until hunger sends him in search of it."

"How very fast the horses are going!" remarked Mrs. Parlot, a little uneasily. "The driver seems to find difficulty in holding them. I hope they are safe."

"What is the matter with your horses, driver?" asked Mr. Ernest. "They seem restless."

"That's just what they be," replied the man. "We're gettin' near the cañon, an' some days the air sets 'em a'most wild. I kinder hated to bring a 'bus load of tender-foots along up yonder, for the ladies mostly gits skeered, an' sometimes they holler. But

that skeers the horses wuss, an' it's a heap better to keep still. I guess a windstorm's not fur off."

They were at that moment ascending a steep hill, and the horses had slackened their pace.

"But why does the air of the cañon excite them?" inquired Lloyd.

"Ef you'll tell me, I'll tell you," replied the man, with the cool familiarity of native-born Californians.

As they were now at the top of the hill, and the horses tearing along again at a break-neck speed, the conversation necessarily ceased.



## CHAPTER XV.

Only two of the party were nervous, Mrs. Parlot and—strange to say—Mr. Ernest. Brave as men usually are, in most things, yet in the matter of horses, he was a veritable coward; and not all the efforts of his really strong will could make him otherwise. When a boy, his father, noticing this trait, had bought him a beautiful Shetland pony, hoping that ownership and familiarity would overcome the inborn dread. But all was useless. The child could not be induced even to approach the animal, and when his father finally lifted him bodily and placed him in the saddle, Ernest's trembling terror amounted almost to a fit, so that the attempt was abandoned once for all. Of course, as he grew older, reason took the upper hand, and he gradually accustomed himself to driving out as occasion seemed to render it advisable; but he never enjoyed it, and never went for personal pleasure. He hailed the approaching advent of the automobile, and was at the present time negotiating for the purchase of one of a kind he specially admired. He had never joined in the bicycle craze. Dignity and wheels were to him irreconcilable terms, at least as far as he himself was concerned; he never objected to their use by others.

He was now, therefore, decidedly uncomfortable in view of the horses' friskiness, and heartily wished himself elsewhere.

Edna's quick eye saw his uneasiness. "He is

anxious about Gabrielle," she thought "How good he is!"

Eudora also privately took notice, but divined better the cause. "I wish he had my panoply against fear," she thought. "I remember how afraid I used to be of various things. What a rest it is to be afraid of nothing."

Something perhaps in her calm, unmoved countenance attracted Mr. Ernest's attention.

"You do not object to this headlong speed, Miss Grayston?" He was seated near her, and the noise prevented their conversation from being heard by the others. "You seem rather to enjoy it, if I am not mistaken."

"I hardly think I really enjoy it, Mr. Warringsford. But I can truly say that I do not feel afraid."

"I"—she hesitated. He was so much of a stranger—he might not like it. But it might do good; she would not let the opportunity slip.

"I have now a remedy for fear, Mr. Warringsford. I used to be extremely nervous."

Mr. Ernest made a long pause, and Eudora felt that perhaps her remark had been an unwise one. But he spoke at last in his slow, measured tones, glancing anxiously from time to time at the horses.

"May I take the liberty of inquiring, Miss Grayston, in what that remedy consists?"

"Certainly," replied Eudora. "It is a very old one, Mr. Warringsford, and yet ever new and efficacious to those who faithfully use it—I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

A longer pause—then Mr. Ernest remarked: "A

simple remedy indeed, Miss Grayston. Rather a preventive, is it not?"

Before Eudora could reply, their driver, by a tremendous exertion of muscle, brought his horses to a standstill, and by the same muscle kept them from starting off again, which they were wild to do; for a man stood by the roadside, holding up a warning arm.

"I just wanted to tell you," he called, as soon as his voice could be heard, "to look out as you go along this here region. I've just killed five rattlers"—rattlesnakes—"and it's pretty likely there's more of 'em about. They was more lively than common, too. I had a stirrin' time of it, I tell you. It's so purty around here that many gets out to walk about a bit. But 'twouldn't be safe to-day, for the critters has got stirred up and might be ugly. No thanks. Good-day to you."

And they were off again as hard as ever.

"How perfectly dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Parlot. "I have such a horror of snakes! And to think of their being all about us! Are there any in the place to which we are going, Mr. Crescent?"

"Very few, Mrs. Parlot. It is more than likely we shall not encounter any. And they are so torpid as never to attack unless first molested—stepped on accidentally, for instance."

"Well, but what is to prevent our stepping on them accidentally? If the grass is at all thick, I should think there would be every danger."

"Have no fears whatever, my dear madam. Throughout the season, lasting perhaps nine months in the year, parties constantly encamp on these grounds,

sometimes for weeks together. This would hardly be the case if there were serious danger of any kind. Besides, Mrs. Parlot"—this he said smilingly—"I trust you would not imagine me capable of taking you into any risk whatever. That, I do assure you, were in the nature of an impossibility."

"O no, indeed, Mr. Crescent," Mrs. Parlot hastened to say. "I never thought of such a thing. Of course, there would be no actual danger. But I am extremely foolish in the matter of snakes, and would prefer not to encounter even the mildest one on earth."

And now they were entering the beautiful Santiago cañon. Their way led through woods studded with immense live oaks and other trees, from some of which hung festoons of the graceful mistletoe, of which Edna declared she would procure some to take home.

"Unfortunately, Miss Edna," said Mr. Crescent, "as you perceive, it mostly hangs too high to be of practical use."

"O, what delightful, cool-looking water-cresses!" exclaimed Mrs. Parlot, as they crossed a small creek. "Cannot we procure some to garnish our dishes?"

"It would hardly be wise to make the horses stop now," interposed Mr. Ernest, hastily, as he saw Mr. Crescent was about to speak to the driver. "They are at present going at a moderate pace, and there is no telling what they may do if checked and then started off again."

"At any rate," said Mr. Crescent, "we are almost at our stopping-place. Some of us can easily come down here and pick all we like."



Five minutes more, and they emerged into a clear open space, at the very foot of the hills.

"This is our camping place," said Mr. Crescent. "Stop under that clump of trees, driver; it will be a good place to tether your horses. Ladies"—as they were severally helped out—"let me introduce to you the celebrated Santiago cañon. I venture to say you will not be disposed to question its right to the adjective."

"No, indeed," replied Gladys, to whom the gentleman specially addressed himself. "It is even finer than I imagined."

"What grand peaks on this side," said Mrs. Parlot. "And do look at that clump of splendid live oaks on our other side."

"And look at the beautiful flowers," said Gabrielle. "O, Miss Edna, do let us start at once to gather some, won't you?"

She also looked at Lloyd as she spoke, and the boy at once prepared to accompany the girls.

"Now, do not go too far, Lloyd," cautioned Mr. Crescent. "There is a possibility of getting lost among those mountains; and also a bare possibility of encountering a mountain lion, if you should wander too far among the hills, though civilization has almost entirely caused the disappearance of this animal."

"Lions!" exclaimed Mrs. Parlot, whom Mr. Crescent had supposed out of hearing. "O, Lloyd! you must not go off from us! I had not the slightest idea of such a thing! Stay, all of you, close behind us, and if any one of us spies anything in the least dan-

gerous or suspicious, let him at once notify the others, and we shall take refuge in the omnibus!"

It was impossible for Mr. Crescent to resist a hearty laugh; and even Mr. Ernest condescended to a broad smile.

"Pardon me, my dear madame," the former gentleman hastened to say; "there is absolutely no danger. I was more in joke than anything else. One child, wandering alone, might possibly be attacked, should the lion be very hungry; but three would send him into a panic of fear. They are small, and not at all fierce, as a general thing; besides, there is barely one chance in a hundred of there being any lurking around in these regions."

But Mrs. Parlot still looked uneasy, and Lloyd, who with the girls had been awaiting the conclusion of their elders, now said: "Very well, mother; I promise you we will not go out of sight of the party, or of some one of them." Which entirely satisfied Mrs. Parlot, and off they went.

"That was good of you," said Edna, as they sauntered along.

"Not at all, Miss Edna; I certainly do not consider myself too old to obey my mother."

"O, of course not! But she did not absolutely forbid your going."

"No, but it would have made her unhappy and spoiled her pleasure; and I have no right to vex my mother in any way that can possibly be prevented."

"You are right indeed," said Edna, warmly. And Gabrielle admired him more than ever.

"Look at that clump of orange poppies!" exclaimed Edna.

"Let us pick plenty of them. Your mother is going to show us how to press them, Lloyd."

"Yes, and she said we were to bring them to her as soon we had gathered a reasonable quantity, as it was best to press them before they began to wilt. We can then return for more."

Meantime, their elders were sauntering about according to their fancy. Eudora, who had not noticed the departure of the younger ones, now saw them at a short distance, and concluded to join them. Mr. Ernest, who thought it only right that he should see after his daughter, begged leave to accompany her; while Mrs. Parlot, Gladys and Mr. Crescent wandered off in a different direction. The butler, meanwhile, busied himself in arranging their table under the shade of a large sycamore tree.

"Now, ladies," said Mr. Crescent, "I propose our going down to that last creek we passed, so as to fill this canteen with water for our lunch. Mr. Ernest says James is a first-class lemonade maker, so we must provide him with one of the chief ingredients. He has his hands full as it is; and I have no doubt by the time our repast is ready we shall be ready for it."

A five minutes' walk brought them to the shady, rippling, pebbly little creek—"more of a rivulet than a creek," remarked Mr. Crescent; "but the smallest stream here is called a creek—at least, so it seems to me."

"Here are some of those delightful water-cresses,"

said Mrs. Parlot. "They shall be my contribution to the luncheon."

Shortly returning, and leaving their burden with James, they wandered about gathering the wild flowers, of some of which there was an abundance, while others were so rare that they were seized upon as treasures when discovered.

Soon the young party returned, bearing goodly branches of blossoms.

"Now, we can all sit under this tree," said Mrs. Parlot, when both parties met, "and I shall initiate you into the mysteries of flower-pressing."

Opening a large atlas she had brought with her, she took from it numerous thin sheets of cotton batting. These she distributed among the party, directing them to split them carefully in two. Then taking the flowers one by one she laid them face downward, sometimes with a few leaves attached, on the fluffy part of the wadding; then laid the other piece of cotton over them when one sheet was filled.

"Each petal and leaf must be perfectly smooth," she said, "or they will not look well when dry."

Then she laid the sheet between the leaves of the atlas, and proceeded to fill the others in the same manner. It was easy now for the learners to help; and by the time they were summoned to luncheon nearly two dozen sheets were completed and tucked away safely in the atlas.

"As soon as you return home," said Mrs. Parlot, "you must put a heavy weight over the whole, and leave them for several days without disturbing. The cotton absorbs the moisture, and they retain their

color—with certain exceptions—these orange poppies, for example. I have never been able to preserve their color beyond a very brief period. No matter how carefully I have pressed them, shortly after being exposed to the light they begin to show white streaks in places, and finally are apt to fade almost completely away. These lovely little blue flowers—Baby-eyes they are often called—look well if very carefully pressed as soon as gathered; but these small lilac ones—I see we have three varieties—do the best of all, looking like satin when taken from the cotton.”

“If we should come here a week or too later,” said Mr. Crescent, “we should find other varieties of wild flowers. And this would be the case through the entire spring, though I am told that just now gives us, upon the whole, the best selection for pressing. But now, ladies”—rising and bowing—“allow me to escort you to the tree beneath whose spreading canopy our sylvan repast is served.”

All laughed as they gladly obeyed the summons, for their early breakfast and long drive in the bracing air had well prepared them to do justice to the feast. The water-cresses were pronounced excellent; also the lemonade; while the fried chicken, tongue, ham, with numerous et ceteras, were more than delicious to their keen appetites.

While thus busily engaged, Gabrielle, happening to glance up at a branch above her head, uttered an exclamation.

“Such a queer-looking thing hanging from that twig,” she said, pointing to the object. “It looks like a long thimble, and—yes, it is really moving.”

Mr. Ernest rose from his lowly position, and drew the branch within range of his eyes.

"A humming-bird's nest," he announced, "containing three young birds, so small that I fear injuring them if I attempt to take them out for your inspection. Ah! here comes the mother," as a buzzing, fussy little creature fluttered about, in evidently deep anxiety. "There are your babies, all safe," he continued, as he reseated himself, while the relieved mite settled herself, happily, though still flutteringly, on top of the wee nest.

"O, I wish I could see the little birds, papa," said Gabrielle.

"Wait until the mother goes off again, daughter; then I shall lift you up to look at them—that is, if she should go off at all while we are here, which I much doubt. But we must not disturb her now."

"She makes her nest from the fuzzy underpart of the sycamore leaf," said Mr. Crescent. "Once, when I was in this very cañon, I noticed, a short distance off, a nest where a decided commotion seemed to be going on. Approaching, I was surprised to see a number of immense black ants dragging the little birds out of the nest. They had succeeded in getting one of them over the edge and I was just about to rescue it, when the mother or father bird darted upon the scene, and actually speedily put the enemy to rout; then carefully pushed the little ones safely back into the nest. If I had not actually witnessed the scene, I should hardly have believed it possible."

## CHAPTER XVI.

It was not without grave misgivings that Mrs. Parlot had consented to seat herself upon the grass—or rather, upon the omnibus cushions—which, nevertheless, did not prevent her feet from nestling amid the unknown dangers of cañon herbage. She had, however, partly forgotten her uneasiness in the diversions of the social feast, when suddenly, a loud scream startled everybody, as she sprang to her feet, upsetting not only her cup of coffee, but numerous other things besides.

“A snake!” she cried out, as she rushed away, followed by every one of the ladies as fast as they could scramble to their feet—not excepting, alas, our brave Eudora! The gentlemen stood upon the defensive, having no weapons of attack, while the butler, murmuring something about getting the omnibus whip, ran precipitately in that direction—the ladies had taken the opposite course.

“What’s up?” drawled the driver, as the man approached breathless.

“A snake!” panted James. “A rattle-snake! Give me the whip and come along.”

“Snakes nothin’!”—in a tone of absolute contempt. “There ain’t one hereabouts. And ’twould n’t hurt you if there was.”

Then muttering something about tenderfoots, he followed James, who had waxed very valiant as he

shrewdly surmised that by this time his snakeship had either been killed, or had escaped.

They found the gentlemen laughing heartily, and Lloyd starting off in pursuit of the ladies, to bring them back with assurances of safety. A peculiar-looking branch from the tree above had fallen, being partially concealed in the thick grass. It was of a gray mottled color, and shaped in such a manner as really to resemble a snake—at least to uninitiated eyes.

"Allow me to introduce to you his snakeship," said Mr. Crescent, with the utmost gravity, though with twinkling eyes. And he held out the branch on the tip of the driver's whip. Mrs. Parlot could scarcely restrain another shriek.

"It looks exactly like one," she said, still tremulously, though forced to laugh. "Even you must acknowledge that, Mr. Crescent."

"It certainly does, Mrs. Parlot. I do not in the least wonder at your alarm. But now, ladies, you may safely resume your seats. We have made a thorough examination of the surrounding grounds, and can assure you that no shadow of suspicion lurks in any part."

But Mrs. Parlot, declaring that she had finished her repast, begged to be excused, while she retired to the omnibus to arrange some more flowers in the remaining sheets of wadding. She was therefore excused, while the others lingered awhile under the shadowing tree, listening to incidents of cañon life, told by Mr. Crescent in a most fascinating manner.

Strange to say, none noticed that Gabrielle was not



among them—or if her father did, he supposed she was safe in the omnibus with Mrs. Parlot. Suddenly Edna exclaimed, "Why, where is Gabrielle?"

All looked startled, but Mr. Ernest quickly replied: "In the omnibus with Mrs. Parlot, I presume."

"Indeed she is not," said Lloyd, now starting up. "I can see through the trees that mother is alone there."

"Perhaps Gabrielle may be lying down on the seat," suggested Gladys—and then she turned pale, as it suddenly occurred to her that she had no recollection of Gabrielle being with them as they returned with Lloyd.

Mr. Ernest started at once for the omnibus, followed by the whole party. Gabrielle was not there! Mrs. Parlot, as did Gladys and Eudora, remorsefully wondered at their blindness in not perceiving sooner the child's absence. But there was no time for regret—immediate action was necessary. Mr. Ernest had at once started off alone towards the place where they had all run together—that being, he thought, the most likely direction for her to have taken. Mr. Crescent, Mrs. Parlot and Gladys went in another direction, and Eudora, Edna and Lloyd in still another. James and the driver, having private views of their own, went up the mountains, armed with whatever improvised weapons they could lay hands on.

"For t'aint no use skeering them worse than they be skeered," said the driver, as they began the ascent. "But only a month ago, a boy was crossin' this here very hill, takin' a short cut to school"—

"School?" echoed James. "There surely ain't any schools in this desert place!"

"There's schools hereabouts when there ain't one cabin nearer than a mile from another cabin—children walks five and six miles many a time back and fro—fur the law, right or wrong, makes 'em go to school. But, anyhow, as I was sayin', the boy started out to cross the mountain, but he didn't come home at evenin'. When they went to hunt him up"—he paused, dramatically, and looked at James, who, in his turn, stopped short in his walk, and looked aghast at the driver.

"When they went to hunt up that boy, they found—nothin' but his boots—the same, maybe, not agreein' with the lion's digestion. Come on, man! What are you standin' there for? We'd ought to be far on our way by this time."

"We've got no guns, nor yet pistols," answered James, tremulously; "and what good will them sticks do against a lion? Tell me that, will you?"

"Ye'd ought to be tooken a stick to yourself," replied the man, contemptuously, and hurrying on. "Go back, ef you're so afeard, an' climb into the 'bus, an' shut the door, an' git under the seat, and stay there till the folks gits back to purtect ye."

But James had concluded to follow, not relishing the contempt of his companion, who, after awhile, condescended to explain the great unlikelihood of their meeting a lion, and in the event of such an encounter, the great probability of the lion being more afraid of the men than the men of the lion.

Meantime, Mr. Ernest had been running first in one

direction, then in another, calling his child's name at intervals, but without success.

"Miss Eudora," said Lloyd, as they walked along, "what *do* you think can have become of Gabrielle? She disappeared so suddenly."

"I don't know, indeed, Lloyd. But I think she will soon be found."

She stopped short for an instant, then turned and went straight towards a thick row of trees, not far from them—so near, in fact, that no one had thought of looking there. Edna and Lloyd followed. As they pushed their way through a slight opening in the brushwood surrounding the trees, there, to their great joy, they saw beyond, and not a hundred yards from them, poor little Gabrielle, seated on a large stone, and crying as though her heart would break. They hastened to her, and she sprang up with a cry of joy as they called her name.

"O, Lloyd! O, Miss Eudora! how glad I am! O, how glad I am!" And now her sobs became almost hysterical.

"Dear child," said Eudora, soothingly. "We are also very happy and thankful. Do please, Lloyd, run as fast as possible after Mr. Ernest. He went in the direction of the creek. And when you have found him, you two can hunt up the rest of the party—perhaps if you shout as you go along they will hear you."

"Indeed they won't," said Edna, as Lloyd ran off, hastily. "If Gabrielle could not hear us, and she so near, it is not likely they will, with the wind blowing harder every moment."

As Eudora and Edna led Gabrielle back to their encampment, the little girl told, through her sobs, how, when they all turned to go back, she thought she would slip away to the creek, which was only a short distance off, and get herself a drink, as she was very thirsty. Then, in trying to return, she had gone too far to one side, she supposed, and the thicket must have hid the party from her. She had no idea she was anywhere near them, she said, but thinking she was entirely lost, had given up in despair, and had sat down on the rock to cry.

"But, Miss Eudora," she almost whispered, "just before you came, I remembered what you had told me about saying a little prayer when we got into any trouble, and I said: 'Please let them find me, and I won't disobey again.'"

"How did you disobey, dear?"

"Why, you know, before we left home, papa had told me I must not, on any account, go wandering off by myself. And I remembered it, too—but I thought it was only a few steps, and I was so thirsty; and I said to myself it wouldn't matter. But all the time I knew I was wrong—I just wanted to do it, you see."

"Well, dear, this will be a lesson for the future—that it is never safe to do wrong. I am sure you will remember it all your life. And now we will be happy again, and thank our dear Lord that he answered our prayer."

"Why, did you pray, too, Miss Eudora?"

"Indeed I did, Gabrielle. I asked Him to tell me which way to go—then those trees came right into my

head. And now, dear, here we are. You can lie down on the omnibus cushion with this shawl for a pillow, and Edna will stay with you while I help Lloyd in searching for the other lost people."

At this moment, she saw Mr. Ernest coming hastily towards them, followed by Lloyd, and Eudora saw the tears in the father's eyes as he took his recovered treasure in his arms.

"Please, papa," she meekly said, "please forgive me, and I won't do it again."

"We shall say no more about it, little daughter—certainly papa forgives his little girl. And we must both thank Miss Eudora for her kind interest in searching for my little truant—and for finding her."

He gave her a look of gratitude, which softened his dark eyes, taking all the sternness from them—a look which, had it been directed to Edna, would have charmed her, but was scarcely noticed by Eudora.

Lloyd, who had started in search of the others, now returned, saying that he had hailed them and that they were coming. Soon all were together again, and great of course were the congratulations, while questions and answers were freely poured forth.

Five minutes passed in this manner. Suddenly Mr. Crescent said: "Ladies, I am sorry to disturb you, but I think we had best at once make preparations for departure. The wind is rising rapidly, and is more likely to increase than otherwise, as it appears to be what they call in these regions a Santa Ana wind, from the fact of its coming over the Santa Ana valley. It blows steadily in the one direction—see how the trees all bend over that way. It is apt to affect people in

the way of headache, or—nervousness”—giving a mischievous glance at Mrs. Parlot, who laughed, yet flushed a little, too. “And, perhaps,” continued Mr. Crescent, with another mischievous look at Gabrielle, “it may have had the effect of confusing one little girl’s perceptions, so that she imagined she was returning with her party, while she was walking away in an opposite direction.”

But at this point tears filled Gabrielle’s eyes, and he came to an abrupt pause.

“Where is James?” asked Mr. Ernest, looking around.

“Both men went up the mountains,” replied Mr. Crescent, “armed with all they could lay hands on in the shape of sticks and stones, to do battle with the lions which they were sure were lurking about in readiness to devour unlucky mortals who might chance to fall in their way.”

At which remark Mr. Ernest turned pale, and Mr. Crescent, feeling that with the laudable intention of raising the spirits of the party he had only succeeded in making three people uncomfortable, concluded that silence was golden, and started off towards the hills, with the hope of sighting the men. Lloyd followed, with some vague hope of really encountering a live lion.

“Do not try to go in search of them, Mr. Crescent,” called Mr. Ernest after him. “You would probably miss them, and they are sure to return before long. The rascals had not any business to go at all—all they wanted was fun. They knew it was impossible for Gabrielle to have gone in that direction without being

seen by some one of us at least. However, we must just wait as patiently as may be; there is no use in tiring yourself out, Mr. Crescent."

"We shall only walk up to the top of that hill and shout," said Mr. Crescent. "They may hear us, or we may see them. It won't do to wait long, as the wind is rapidly rising and it is growing late."

So saying, he and Lloyd proceeded on their way, while the others seated themselves, the ladies in the omnibus out of the wind, while Mr. Ernest went over and looked with anxious eyes at the horses, who were snorting at intervals, and showing signs of restlessness.

Presently the two men appeared, coming hastily down the mountain, but in a different direction from that in which Mr. Crescent and Lloyd had gone. And at the same instant, the two latter, who had caught sight of the men, came down almost on a run, the wind assisting their progress.

"Harness up as quickly as possible," said Mr. Ernest to the driver. "We are altogether too late now, and I fear the wind is increasing."

"Yes, *sir*," replied the man. "It's goin' to be on a tare, an' the horses'll be jollier than ever."

With which comforting remark, he proceeded to his business, and soon the party were started on their journey home.

The driver's prophecy was a mild one as compared with the facts. It seemed as if wind and horses were running a race. There was surely now, if ever, an excuse for feeling nervous, as the animals ran through the creeks, splashing the water even up to the omnibus

windows—on through the woods crashing dried branches beneath their feet, sometimes jolting up against a stump—out of the woods into a narrow, dusty road, where rabbit, squirrel or gopher holes right in the very middle of the path made apparently imminent the risk of breaking the horses' legs—down a steep hill with a precipice on one side—up another hill without cessation of speed—on, on—until it surely seemed as if the animals must drop down from sheer exhaustion. A heavily-laden wagon in front of them forced their driver to exert his strength and bring the horses to a stand-still, though chafing and pawing at the restraint. Mr. Ernest took the opportunity to remonstrate.

"Now, look here, driver, if you can come to a stop in that way, surely you can keep from going at such a headlong, not to say, break-neck speed."

The man grinned.

"'Taint no use, boss. It's a heap easier to stop 'em short than to keep 'em slow-like onct they're started. It's the Injun blood in 'em. There aint no danger, boss. This here's too heavy a load for the wind to lift up and turn over, as it might ef 'twas lighter. Lots of buggies has been done that way in a Santa Aner—and onct a waggon to my certint knowledge—but there aint no danger here."

Then off they were again, headlong as ever.

"Say coachy," jerked out James through the jolts, "do you know what them horses reminds me of?"

"Wal, I don't. Not being a magician—*nor* yet a cleer-voyant."

"Well, you said it was easier to stop them all at



once than to keep them goin' at a moderate pace, didn't you ? ”

“That's right, me boy. That there's the very incidental remark I let fall.”

“Well, then, that reminds me of the drink. It's easier to stop short all to once than to keep goin' at a moderate pace.”

Then both subsided into silence as wind and jolts made conversation a rather difficult matter. Inside all was quiet too. Gabrielle and Lloyd really enjoyed the adventure—the wild pace—the roar of the wind—the simultaneous bowing of the tall trees in the one direction—the mad chase of the nimble weeds growing by the roadside, broken off by the wind and tumbling over and over, one after the other, until often they alighted in a creek, and sailed gleefully down the stream—all this was nothing but fun to the inexperience which recognized no danger in anything. Gladys also rather enjoyed it—it took her so completely from herself, and the thoughts which at other times would intrude, and would not be denied admittance. Edna was divided between fear and pleasure. Eudora, naturally timid, would have been glad to find herself at home again. But her panacea was always at hand, and she was calm. Mr. Crescent felt a little anxiety for the safety of the party in his charge—as to himself he was indifferent. Mrs. Parlot and Mr. Ernest were the only ones who were really frightened ; the former making no secret of her fears ; the latter's efforts to appear unmoved being successful as far as most of the party were concerned.

But nothing lasts forever ; even this risky ride must

come to an end, and finally the horses came to a stand, panting and covered with foam, in front of the depot from which they had started.

"Too late for the 5:10 train," said Mr. Crescent, as after paying and dismissing the driver he made a hasty inquiry at the office window. "Next train is not due until 6:20. Pleasant news, isn't it, for you poor tired ladies? But it gives you another opportunity for exercising the proverbial patience of your sex."

It was not pleasant news—the thought of waiting for an hour in that bare waiting-room—tired as they really were from the excitement of the past few hours.

"I just think it's too bad!" said Edna in a low voice to Eudora, who was seated beside her. "And we only missed the train by three minutes! Isn't it too vexatious for anything?"

"O, I don't think so," replied Eudora, smilingly. "We are not responsible for the delay, since we could not have managed it otherwise."

"Why, yes, we could, Eudora. If we had only started five minutes earlier, which we could easily have done."

"If we had known we were going to be three minutes late we could—but you see we did not know, little sister. I am learning to give up these 'ifs,' and am ever so much happier in consequence. Just try it, and see what difference it makes."

Just then Mr. Ernest seated himself on Edna's other side, and addressing his conversation chiefly to her for a large part of the waiting hour, she was more than content, and decided in her own mind that Eudora was quite right.

## CHAPTER XVII.

The following afternoon, Tony arrived at the class with tear-stained cheeks, and without the baby. "The little chap's awful sick," he explained in answer to Eudora's inquiries. "I wouldn't a left him, only mother's not drunk to-day, an' she's takin' care of him—pop's there too. He's awful sick, he is." And the child wiped away the tears with his jacket sleeve, a whole clean jacket now, for Eudora, with Mrs. Warringsford's help, had procured him decent clothing. 'Mely was also provided for, and very differently did the two children look from the first day of Tony's appearance in the store. Self-respect was awakened, bad language was on the decline, and altogether, Eudora felt encouraged. Tony's friend, Jim, likewise showed signs of improvement, though not to the same extent.

The class now numbered about a dozen; the attendance varying according to the attraction or non-attraction of outside matters. Once a rat-fight carried off the whole school, with the exception of Tony, who longed ardently to go, but feeling that to do so would be an act of disloyalty to his dear teacher—though of course he did not put it that way—valiantly fought the battle with himself, and arrived at the appointed time with 'Mely and the baby, Eudora never suspecting that the boy had done as valiant a deed that day as many a hero who fights his country's battles.

"Gladys," said Eudora, going to her sister in the

sitting-room, "Tony says the baby is very sick. Would you not like to go over and see about it? They will probably be in need of assistance or food."

"I will go," said Gladys, shortly; and in a few minutes departed. It was not the first time she had gone to that miserable home. She was becoming really interested in the baby, and took pleasure in making him some little article of dress, which she would herself carry over, and put on him.

If any one thing more than another could have marked the change which had come over Gladys, it was her willingness to enter such an abode, and to witness its misery. Her fastidiousness had always hitherto declined such errands. Even when their governess, who was a kind-hearted, conscientious woman, occasionally took the other girls to distribute with their own hands the garments they had made or mended for the poor, she could never induce Gladys to accompany them. Now it seemed a relief to her own distress to endeavor to minister to the distress of others, and many a time had she carried some left-over provisions to the poor children, who sadly needed them.

She found the baby lying on an old mattress covering the rickety four-posted bed, which served as the resting-place for the entire family. The mother was rocking herself back and forth, crying over the little form out of which the life had nearly departed. The father sat a short distance off, looking half stupefied, and as if hardly conscious of what was going on.

"Have you had the doctor?" asked Gladys.

"O, yes, miss, but he says it's no use—he couldn't do nothin'."

A fresh burst of sobs roused the man to such an extent that he got up, walked unsteadily over to the bed, gave the child a stupid stare, then meandered back again, and seemed at once to fall asleep, his head sunk on his breast. Gladys had brought some hastily prepared nourishment for the child ; but even her inexperienced eyes saw the uselessness of attempting to administer it.

"Tony ought to be here," she said. "I shall go and bring the children over." She also wished to consult with Eudora as to what was best to be done under the circumstances.

Upon hearing Gladys' report, Eudora at once dismissed her class, and accompanied her sister back, followed by the children. As they entered, a loud burst of grief told the sad story. The last breath had just left the little body, and the little spirit had gone happily home to God.

Tony ran over to the bed, and snatched the tiny form in his arms. But when the marble flesh touched his, and he saw the glazed eyes and falling jaw, he felt instinctively, though for the first time he looked upon death, that never more could those blue eyes look smilingly into his, nor those fast-stiffening arms be stretched out in mute appeal to be taken to the brother's clasp.

Shudderingly he laid the little body down, and with a heart-breaking moan, threw himself prostrate on the floor in an agony of grief. Eudora tried to comfort

him, but all her efforts were in vain—the sorrow must have vent, or the little heart would well-nigh break.

The father, now thoroughly aroused by the noise, and sobered by the knowledge that his child was really gone, took his hat and went to notify a friend whom the mother had mentioned to Gladys upon her inquiring for whom they should send. Meantime, both girls arranged the wretched room as well as was possible under the circumstances. Then Gladys returned home to prepare some food for the family, there being apparently no provisions in the house.

Shortly afterwards, in came a respectable-looking woman, who seemed much concerned at the sad event. Eudora and she had a short conversation in the small shed adjoining their one room. The woman told her that Tony's parents had once been well-to-do people; that the hard times had thrown the man out of work; and finding all efforts vain to secure employment enough to keep his family in any kind of comfort, he took to drinking out of sheer discouragement. The wife, probably at first to allay the gnawings of hunger, gradually joined him—for he always drank at home, never in saloons—until both had fallen to their present sad condition.

"And she was as pretty and as nice a girl as ever you could lay eyes on, miss," said the friend, wiping away the tears with her apron. "An' he was good-lookin' too; you can see the children's purtier than common. But the drink's somethin' terrible when onct it lays hold of man or woman either. Seems as if it would never let go its hold. Heaven help them all!"

Finding out from the parents that they had no plans nor wishes in regard to the child's funeral, Eudora ascertained from the friend where the minister whose church they formerly attended lived, and she resolved to call upon him and acquaint him with the facts. Then she persuaded Tony to return home with her, where she intended keeping him until the time for the funeral. Mrs. Warringsford, as usual, came to her help with the offer of a fold-up canvas bed, which Eudora put up in one corner of the store, from whence it could be easily taken away in the morning.

Towards evening, she called on the minister. He was an elderly man, kind and genial in manner, and he listened with interest to Eudora's account. He remembered the family when she mentioned the name, but said he thought they had long since left the city.

"I have a committee organized in my church," he said, "to look after just such cases; but it was probably not in existence at the time these people drifted from us. My parish is so large that it is impossible for me to keep track of each person connected with it; and these committees take a great deal of such work off my hands."

He then told Eudora at what hour on the following day he could hold the funeral service, promised that their immediate wants should be attended to, and that efforts would also be made for their future well-being.

The next afternoon, after a short service at the house, the little body was laid in its final resting-place. Mrs. Warringsford had given Gladys a profusion of white flowers to lay about the pretty little casket provided by the church committee, who had at once re-

sponded to their pastor's call, and had also given the father and mother clothing suitable for the occasion. The girls, with Mrs. Warringsford's assistance, had fitted out the children, and extremely respectable was the appearance of the whole family when the last sad rites were being performed. Sore as Tony's heart was for the little brother whose special care-taker he had been, yet he could not help feeling soothed and comforted by the attentions lavished on them all; and a feeling of gratified pride came over him, when, glancing even through his tears at the little party assembled for the ceremony, he saw in the doorway the awed and admiring faces of his friend Jim and several other boys of the mission class!

But, when all was over, and he had returned to his desolate home, over which the darkness was again fast falling, his grief once more had the upper hand, and he sobbed out to Eudora, who was bidding him good-bye: "I did n't take no stock in the baby, an' I used ter wish he'd never been borned. But I wish it all the same now, for"—with a fresh burst of sobs—"if he hadn't—never had been borned, he wouldn't—never—have died!"



## CHAPTER XIX.

"Get out your best attractions to adorn your window," said Mr. Crescent one day to Edna; "and make your store as alluring as possible. La Fiesta is approaching. It always draws large crowds, some eastern people even timing their visit hitherward so as to be present at this great event. It is the harvest-time of the Los Angeles merchants, and, though you are somewhat out of the way, still you may possibly profit to a certain extent by the business activity surrounding you."

"I have heard of La Fiesta," said Edna, who just then was alone in the store: it was towards evening, and Gladys was preparing dinner. Eudora had not yet returned from Mrs. Warringsford's, whose mending day this happened to be. "We can see the processions, at any rate, and it will be something to write about to our Eastern friends."

"I propose that you shall see a good deal of it, Miss Edna. But we can make our plans later on. We have yet a week before us, although the people are wild over the prospect, and numerous flags are already flying. Ah! good evening, Miss Eudora. We are speaking of the coming Fiesta; you have doubtless heard of it."

"This evening, for the first time," replied Eudora. I hardly yet understand exactly what it is, though I imagine it somewhat resembles the Mardi Gras festival at New Orleans."

"In some of its features," said Mr. Crescent. "Especially in the masquerade, which takes place on the closing night; and which, by the bye, many good citizens would gladly eliminate from the programme, since the liberty then given is apt to degenerate into license. But the celebration, in its main features, is peculiar to Southern California, and could not be so successfully carried on elsewhere. Since the whole year is a succession of harvests of one kind or other, it is not necessary to select any special season for the ingathering rejoicing. But by the middle of April comes a time of comparative leisure, since the orange crop is then mostly gathered and disposed of, and the summer crop of cereals and deciduous fruits is not ready to be harvested. Then, too, the slight chill of winter has passed—the dust which later on is not a pleasant feature of this region, has not yet begun to accumulate—in fact, everything is at its best. It is a very old institution introduced into California by the first Spanish settlers; some even think that the Indians held something of a fiesta as a token of appreciation of the bountiful conditions surrounding them. But I ought to be off," continued Mr. Crescent, consulting his watch. "I have an engagement at seven, and it is now a quarter past six; I suppose, though, I have a few minutes yet to spare."

But he lingered even after the few minutes were over, and only when he was forced to go, or miss his appointment, did he reluctantly take his departure. He was barely outside the door, when Gladys summoned them to dinner.

"Why didn't you come in and see Mr. Crescent?"

asked Edna. "I am sure he was disappointed not to meet you."

"I can't see," replied her sister, coolly, "that it is necessary he should behold all three of us every time he comes, which, as you know, is very often, being our business manager."

"And, in fact, our general manager all around, it seems to me," said Edna. "But, to tell you the truth, Gladys, my private opinion is, that he would rather be a *special* manager. Perhaps he is tired of general skirmishing, and intends for the future to take aim only in one direction."

"Edna," said Eudora, admonishingly, though Edna was sure she saw a twinkle in her eyes, "do speak more respectfully of our father's old friend. Mr. Crescent takes, as far as possible, his place to us, and is certainly one of the kindest, most considerate of friends. It would be a great pity to spoil our pleasure in his society by giving way to foolish imaginings."

"And, besides," added Gladys, severely, "I have often told you, Edna, that such speeches were very vulgar, and not indulged in by ladies."

Thus quenched, Edna concluded to keep silence for the future. Meantime, her private opinion only gained in strength as the days went by. But now her thoughts reverted to the coming celebration.

"We can arrange all the flowers we pressed, Gladys," she said, "and exhibit them in the window. They will look beautiful on those lovely tinted, scalloped cards we have in the drawer. Your taste will have to come into requisition there. But, Eudora, you said you heard of La Fiesta for the first time this evening.

Did Mrs. Warringsford tell you about it? And did she say anything about inviting us to go with her to see the sights?"

"It was there I heard of it," replied Eudora. "And something *was* said about our joining them in sight-seeing, little sister."

"O, splendid!" exclaimed Edna, clapping her hands. "Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Possibly, dear, because I have not the slightest idea of going, at least through the day, though I see no objection to your doing so if you choose. You will hear enough of it from Gabrielle to-night, if she should be awake when you go over."

"O, I am going early this evening to celebrate my last night over there. I wish it wasn't! I've had such a lovely time, and only wish it were to do over again. Gabrielle says her father is going to allow her to stay up for half an hour every evening after you go, so that you can all have a pleasant time together in the parlor. Won't it be lovely?"

"Well, Edna, you are going to have the loveliness to yourself, for some time to come, at least. I told Mrs. Warringsford to-day that I would make no change for the present."

Gladys looked inquiringly at her sister, and Edna clasped her hands in ecstasy.

"Really and truly, and on your honor, Eudora? and is it a real, true and actual fact?"

"Really and truly, little sister. And I am glad it makes you so happy. We are both satisfied."

"But, Eudora," said Gladys, "I hope you are not doing this on my account. You know I sleep very

well now as a usual thing, and I don't think I shall disturb Edna any more."

"It is not that—chiefly"—replied Eudora. "I truly prefer it this way, Gladys, and I think you have no special objection, so we are suited all around."

"The only trouble is," said Edna, dolefully, "that they won't like it so well over there. I don't think Gabrielle cares so much, for now she is used to me, and we really do have jolly times. But I know Mrs. Warringsford likes you ever so much better, and thinks you have such a good influence over Gabrielle. 'Miss Eudora is so lovely and has such perfect manners,' I heard her say once to somebody: 'I consider it a great privilege to have her so much with the children.'"

Edna's voice and manner were so good an imitation of Mrs. Warringsford that it was impossible to keep from laughing.

"But," continued Edna, more cheerfully, "you are there on Monday for all day, you know, and Gabrielle is with you all afternoon, so they must be satisfied with that. And sometimes, you know, you spend two days there."

"Yes," replied Eudora; "I *have* been doing so, but for the future I am going to bring the work over home and do it here; at least, for awhile. I hope you have neither of you any objection?"

Gladys and Edna both looked surprised.

"Of course not," said Gladys, at last. "But, Eudora, why are you making the change? And will Mrs. Warringsford like it?"

"Of course she won't," said Edna, before her sister

had time to reply. "I have just been saying how glad she was to have her over there on account of Gabrielle."

"Well, Gabrielle can easily come here when her school is over. I think that will do just as well, will it not, little sister?"

"I don't know," said Edna, doubtfully. "Why, no, of course it won't. Gabrielle told me she always looked forward so to Monday, because her father came home that afternoon, and you were there too, and you three had such nice times together. I don't see why you want to go and spoil it all. I only wish I had the chance!"

"I sincerely wish you had, Edna." Eudora spoke pleasantly, but there was a troubled look in her eyes, so seldom seen there that Edna concluded to drop the subject, though wondering within herself as to the cause.

Eudora had as yet said nothing to Mrs. Warringsford in regard to this change, and now she began to hesitate, and wonder whether, after all, she would be acting wisely. She had up to this time only considered the matter in one light. Now Edna's words had caused her to regard it in another, and she began seriously to doubt the wisdom of her decision. It probably would displease Mrs. Warringsford, especially as she could give no satisfactory reason for the change; it would disappoint Gabrielle, it would cause speculations in both houses as to the cause, in fact, make a general disturbance. And, after all, had she cause enough to warrant her taking such a step? In her perplexity she did what she ought to have done in the

first place—consulted her Guide ; and in the quiet, as she listened for the still small voice, it told her, Wait.

So matters went on as usual, and La Fiesta was at hand.

“Miss Eudora,” said Mr. Ernest, as he came into the nursery one Monday afternoon—the young girl was sewing as usual, while Gabrielle was chattering away to her—“perhaps you are not aware that La Fiesta begins to-morrow. It is, nevertheless, a fact.”

Eudora looked up smiling, and Gabrielle clapped her hands gleefully.

“Yes, I had heard so, Mr. Ernest, from our vegetable Chinaman and other trades-people. They all seem much excited at the near approach of the great event. How long does it last?”

“Five days, Miss Eudora. But on the first day the exercises are merely preliminary, and comparatively few care to attend them. On the second comes the main day-procession, and in the evening the concert. On the third day there is an athletic performance, and at night the brilliantly illuminated parade, ‘The Lands of the Sun.’ The next day is the children’s celebration, and a ball, and it closes on the fifth day with the famous flower parade, of which you have doubtless heard. There is also that night the carnival of maskers ; from which last the more reputable part of the community are usually conspicuous by their absence, although, of course, many go from curiosity to look on.”

"O papa," exclaimed Gabrielle," "you'll take us to see it all, won't you?"

"Not all, little daughter. But I shall certainly take you to see a large part of it, as I have already promised you. Miss Eudora, you will hardly care to attend the preliminary exercises to-morrow, but I think you will enjoy seeing the parade on the following afternoon, and attending in the evening the concert at the pavilion. Then on the following evening, 'The Lands of the Sun'—which is said to be a really gorgeous sight—and on the last afternoon the flower parade. These I have marked as being the sights you will probably most enjoy. Mr. Crescent and myself have secured a bay window up-stairs in a place where the processions and parades are seen to the very best advantage. My mother will be with us part of the time, and Mrs. Parlot all the time, I believe. Mr. Crescent intends speaking to Miss Gladys on the subject this evening, and Lloyd is counting on escorting Miss Edna, whom he greatly admires. Boys of his age usually admire girls older than themselves, I believe."

Gabrielle withdrew from her father's encircling arms, and tears filled her eyes.

"Then I am to be left out," she said, with a sob which she tried to restrain.

"Why, my little daughter!" exclaimed Mr. Ernest, as he drew her to him again. "What put such an idea into your head? Did I not tell you that I would take you? We are all going together in a party. The window is large enough for us all. I only meant that Lloyd would consider Miss Edna his special charge."



"And am I *your* special charge?" asked Gabrielle, the sore place in her little heart still aching.

"Certainly, dear; you and Grandmamma and Miss Eudora—if she will kindly allow me the pleasure."

He bent his dark eyes inquiringly upon Eudora, who, having no answer prepared, merely murmured her thanks, and kept on diligently with her sewing.

In the evening, Mr. Crescent called. After some general conversation in regard to La Fiesta, he said:

"Mr. Ernest and myself have arranged a programme, young ladies, which we think includes everything likely to be of special interest to all."

He then sketched about the same plan of proceedings which Eudora had already heard from Mr. Ernest, and continued, as he saw Edna looking anxious: "We shall manage about you, Miss Edna. It might be bad policy to close the store entirely; but at the time of the chief processions, which are only in the afternoons or evenings, it would be useless to try to keep it open. The first day will be your main harvest, as strangers are then walking about the city on tours of exploration, not caring much usually for the opening exercises. On the second and fifth days you may safely close it for the afternoon, but the remainder of the time I would advise it kept open. You will thus see what you will care the most about in the daytime, and have all your evenings free besides. How will that do, Miss Edna?"

"Delightfully," said Edna. "I had no idea I was going to see so much. And I think you are very, very kind, Mr. Crescent."

"The obligation is on my side, I assure you, Miss

Edna. You have no idea what an interest it is to a lonely old fellow like myself to have some lively young folks about him, to give him a chance to live over his own youth in theirs. I think if it had not been for your being here, I should have returned to New York to spend the winter, in spite of all the doctors in the world. But business must be attended to, Miss Edna," he added, in a joking tone; "and you and I are partners, you know."

There was a long silence after Mr. Crescent took his departure, during which two of the girls looked extremely grave. Each had her special reason therefor, and each was in the dark as to the other's reasons. Edna broke silence at last.

"Well, girls, what *are* you thinking about? One might suppose you had just heard something very disagreeable, instead of having had a most delightful invitation."

"I was thinking," said Gladys, slowly, "that I should very much prefer not attending any of these gay sights. I am in no mood for them, and I would have told Mr. Crescent so, only I dislike greatly disappointing him, when he has taken so much trouble chiefly for our benefit. What shall I do, Eudora?"

Eudora hesitated. "I hardly think," she said at last, "that you can refuse now, when you made no objection at first, thus tacitly accepting his kindness." But even as she said it, she felt that the same reasoning applied to herself, and she came to an abrupt conclusion.

"And then, think how you would disappoint him,"

said Edna, eagerly. "Why, Gladys, it would spoil everything for him. I know it would."

And deep down in her heart, Gladys knew it too!

That night she was restless and nervous to a degree unusual of late. For she had been growing so much calmer and more cheerful that Eudora had great hopes that the trouble was gradually passing from her, and that it had been more imaginary than real. But now she had started up at intervals in the same distress as at first, sometimes moaning and uttering incoherent words. Late in the night she fell asleep quietly, and then Eudora's thoughts reverted to her own case. What had she best do? For it was useless now shutting her eyes to what she feared was a fact, that indefiniteness was fast becoming definiteness, and she felt that *something* ought to be done before the former had actually merged into the latter. But what?

Her troubled brain surged back and forth, suggesting first this plan, then that, each one only to be rejected in its turn. She was fast becoming nervous and feverish, going back to the former restless anxious questionings as to whether she was doing right or wrong, to the surgings and tossings, the vacillations and uncertainties of her "day of Time." Suddenly she remembered. "Have I again so soon forgotten my Guide?" she thought. "My Counselor in every perplexity, my dear unfailing Friend!"

Then laying all her perplexities, anxieties and fears into the strong Hands which never had refused to hold them, in the dawn of that new "Day of Christ," within her heart, she fell into a quiet sleep.

## CHAPTER XX.

"Eudora," said Edna, next morning, after Gladys had gone to her class-room and the two were washing the dishes together, "did you notice how badly Gladys looked this morning? Has anything new happened?"

"Not that I know of," replied Eudora. "But she was very restless last night, and shows the effects this morning."

"O dear!" said Edna, with a deep sigh. "I did so hope she was all over that! And now she looks as badly as ever!"

"We must not expect too much," said Eudora cheerfully. "People take relapses sometimes, but I hardly think this will last long. If it should, dear, it will doubtless be for some good purpose. Faith and patience, little sister !

"To wait on God, no time is lost.  
Wait on, wait on!"

"Eudora," said Edna, after a pause, "I am going to make a confession. Perhaps you won't like it, though?" She paused and looked inquiringly at her sister.

"Say on, Edna. I don't think I shall mind it."

"Well, then, you too have been looking rather—well, rather grumpy of late—not exactly grumpy either—but grave, and as if you were not happy. Especially last night, and I was beginning to think that

perhaps you didn't feel any more as you used to, or that your way wasn't any better than anyone else's way. But this morning you look as bright as ever, and—I suppose I made a mistake. There now! Are you vexed?"

Eudora smiled. "No, indeed, Edna. Not at all. You are partly right and partly wrong. I have not been quite so happy as usual just lately, being perplexed and not knowing what was best to do. And through my neglect, my lamp of faith has not been burning as brightly as it might. I had lost, for the moment, my firm grip of the guiding Hand that is always waiting to take my own and lead me in exactly the path I ought to go, and have been taking upon myself the responsibility of finding my own way, and tiring myself in the effort. But it is all right now, little sister, and I hope you will see no more 'grumpy' looks from me."

"O well, they weren't very grumpy—not cross, I mean, the way you used to look long ago. I used constantly to be afraid of doing or saying something that would bring down on myself one of your disapproving looks or speeches."

"You poor child!" said Eudora, laughing, "I must have been very disagreeable, though at the time I did not realize it. It does not do to cultivate the negative side of one's character. I think I must have resembled the lady I read about, who was in the habit of saying to her child's nurse, 'Mary, see what Charlie is doing, and tell him *not* to do it.'"

Edna laughed heartily. "That was just about it, Eudora. I was always expecting to hear you say,

don't; and I did everything under a sense of condemnation, not soothing, to say the least."

"I should think not, indeed. The fact is, Edna, I was fonder of the 'shalt not' of the law, than the 'shalt' of the Gospel. Now it is the other way, and I am finding out more and more from day to day that the affirmative includes the negative—or rather, does away with all need for the negative. But we must hurry a little, Edna. This is your 'harvest day' at the store, you know, and it is nearly time for me to go to work too; I sew at Mrs. Warringsford's to-day as well as yesterday, as I am making over some of the children's clothes. I have concluded to make no change in that respect for the present."

"I am so glad," said Edna, "for I am sure they wouldn't like it. Gabrielle said last night, how glad she was that you were to be there again to-day, for she was going to help you sew."

"Yes, Mrs. Warringsford is anxious that she should learn how to use her needle, and she is really showing quite an aptitude for the art. I am cutting her out some clothes for her doll, and she is making them very neatly."

Then Eudora, with a good-bye kiss to Edna, went off to carry out the advice of Gœthe, "Do the duty that lies nearest thee," or in old English parlance, "Do the nexte thyng," knowing that this was the first step towards the unraveling of that tangle of perplexity which seemed to be winding itself around her of late. About four o'clock, in walked Mr. Ernest, tired of sight-seeing, he said.

"O papa!" exclaimed Gabrielle, running to meet

him. "How glad I am! You didn't say you were coming home so early. See how nicely I have made my dolly's dress." And she held it up for inspection.

"Very nicely, indeed, my little daughter. I am much pleased at your proficiency. It is most kind of Miss Eudora to take such pains with you, and I hope you appreciate her kindness."

"Yes, indeed," said Gabrielle, earnestly. "And I just wish that she lived here all the time. Don't you, papa?"

If Mr. Ernest's composure were ruffled in the very slightest degree, he gave no sign thereof, but replied in his usual measured tones, "Indeed I do, daughter—if Miss Eudora would like it herself. But, Gabrielle, it seems to me that dolly needs a pair of new shoes to go with that fine dress. Shall I take her measure, and get her a pair when I go up town again?"

"O, thank you, papa. Yes, she really does need a pair. But let me measure her, for I don't think you would know how. I mean," she hastened to explain, fearing that she might have hurt her father's feelings, "that men don't usually know much about dollies; now do they, papa?"

"No indeed, daughter. So take your own way about it. Miss Eudora, you have not missed much to-day. There was noise, and rushing and crowding, but nothing of very special interest—according, at least, to my idea."

"Are there many strangers in the city, Mr. Ernest?"

"Any amount of them, Miss Eudora. The hotels are crowded. I met several New York friends this morning. They have been traveling through South-

ern California, making short stays at various points—chiefly at the sea-side resorts, which are more interesting to some people in winter than in summer, especially to those who prefer avoiding a crowd—and have timed their visit to Los Angeles so as to witness La Fiesta. I should think it likely that some of your former friends might be among them. If so, you may possibly run across them to-morrow.”

“Perhaps in the evening,” said Eudora. “But, Mr. Ernest, I have decided that it would be better not to make any change in my sewing arrangements. The houses where I am engaged for the remainder of this week, are directly in the line of the processions—so I am told—I shall therefore have a good view of them, without stopping my work to any great extent. But for the evenings I shall gratefully accept your kindness, and join the rest of the party in sight-seeing.”

Eudora had continued her sewing during her speech, and only looked up when it was ended. If she had needed anything to confirm her in the assurance that she had made a right decision, the change in Mr. Ernest’s face would have been enough. There was a perceptible pause, after which he replied in his coldest, haughtiest tones, “you will, of course, act according to your own pleasure, Miss Eudora.” Then after a few remarks to Gabrielle, he bowed and left the room.

“I wonder what is the matter with papa,” said Gabrielle, who had not been attending to the previous conversation. “He looks just as he does when something makes him angry. Did you vex him, Miss Eudora?” But Eudora was spared the necessity of re-



plying by Logan running in to announce that an organ-man with a monkey was down stairs, upon which both children ran off together.

Meantime, Edna was having an experience of her own at the store. She was, as Mr. Crescent had predicted, kept extremely busy all morning. Strangers wandering about the streets and coming across this unexpected little store with its attractive window, and a certain something about it impossible to define, but differing from stores in general, and noticing many little artistic souvenirs in the shape of pressed flowers, sea-mosses and shells, or small paintings of California scenery, made numerous purchases, so that Edna's money box began to fill up in a delightful manner. As she bent over it during a lull in the business, giving a guess at its contents, the door opened and a young lady entered. As she approached the counter, and Edna looked up, the recognition was mutual.

"Why, Laura Savin!"

"Why, Edna Grayston!"

And the former friends kissed each other delightedly. Laura had been Edna's most intimate companion in New York, and many had been the promises of correspondence between them, promises as yet unfulfilled on either side. When the warm greetings were ended, Laura looked curiously around her.

"Why, Edna, what are you doing here? Playing philanthropist, I suppose, to let some poor girl get an outing!"

"No, indeed," said Edna, laughing; but she felt a flush of something like shame mounting to her face.

"I am the poor girl myself, and this is my own store."

Laura gave her an astonished stare.

"Not really, Edna? You are surely joking."

"Indeed, I am not, Laura. My father died suddenly last summer, and, owing to other people's failures, was so involved that we were left almost penniless. If he had lived longer, he would have righted matters, but—"

Edna stopped short, as the tears, from various causes, ran down her cheeks.

"You poor dear!" said her friend, impulsively. "I am awfully sorry! It's a dreadful shame, so it is! I'm so glad I happened to come in. Mamma is making a call a few doors off, and as I didn't want to go in, I told her I would walk about until she came out. We have been traveling about nearly all winter, and came here to see La Fiesta before returning to New York. I shall go now, and wait in the carriage until she comes out, when I shall bring her in to see you."

And Laura went off, on kindly thought and deed intent. Edna would gladly have been excused from seeing the mother. She remembered her as a pompous, worldly woman, utterly different from the daughter, who was a favorite with all. But she could not, of course, make any objection.

Laura met her mother on the sidewalk, just about to enter the carriage.

"Wait a moment, mamma. I want to tell you something." And, drawing her to one side, she gave her a hasty account of what had happened.

"It is very sad, indeed, my dear. But could you not have told me all this on our way home?"

"Why, mamma! I want you to come in to see her, and invite her to call on us at the hotel, and show her some attention, and—"

"My dear," said Mrs. Savin, as Laura paused, "I shall of course go in and see your friend, if you wish it; but as to inviting her to call, and such things, it would hardly be suitable, nor probably would she have time to accept invitations. There are conventionalities, dear—"

They had been walking on while speaking, and at this moment arrived at the door, at which Edna was waiting to receive them. Laura's down-cast countenance apprised her that something was amiss, though the young girl tried to smile at her as brightly as before.

"How do you do, Miss Grayston?" said Mrs. Savin, extending graciously the tips of her fingers. "I am extremely sorry to hear of your sad loss. The vicissitudes of life are great—ah, yes, indeed, very great."

Here the lady gave a profound sigh, then paused, and looked around her.

"But what a charming little store you have! Laura, my dear, I am sure you will find something here you will like to purchase. What beautifully pressed wild flowers! And those sea-mosses and shells! I have never seen any quite so pretty. Let me have one of each style, Miss Grayston, if you please. And I should like that small painting of Ramona's cottage; it seems a favorite subject for painting on orange-wood, for I have seen several in the shop windows; but this is the prettiest. Have you found any books that you fancy, Laura? No? Well, then, Miss Gray-

ston," laying down a five-dollar bill, "I presume this will pay for these things. No, I beg of you," as Edna opened her money-box to take out the change; "pray do me the favor of keeping it"—pausing abruptly as Edna, with flaming cheeks, took out two dollars and handed it to her.

"Your purchases come to three dollars exactly," she said, in a tone so strange and cold that it startled even herself. "Here are two dollars change. Thank you."

Mrs. Savin looked somewhat disconcerted. "Excuse me," she said, shortly; "no offense was intended. Good morning, Miss Grayston. Come, Laura." And she was about to sweep majestically away when Laura, who had been standing with her back to the others, apparently absorbed in examining the books on the opposite shelf, though inwardly fretting and fuming at the attitude her mother had assumed towards her dearest friend, now came forward and kissed Edna impulsively.

"Good-bye for the present, dear Edna. But I shall be back again just as soon as ever I can—perhaps tomorrow."

"O, my dear," interposed her mother, pausing at the door, "your time will be taken up entirely with sight-seeing, you know; and we shall be leaving in a few days; so I hardly think you will be able to return again, much as you would doubtless like to do so."

Then she sailed away, followed a moment later by Laura, who had delayed to give her friend a parting hug, and to whisper, "But I shall come back if I possibly can, you darling girl."

Edna stood for a while in a state of mind hard to describe. It was her first experience of the kind. Hitherto, the only persons she had met with socially, with the exception of Mrs. Parlot, had been in the evening, at Mrs. Warringsford's house. They had naturally treated her as she was treated by their hostess. Besides, Mrs. Warringsford's friends were not chosen on account of their riches, and any one of them who had shown vulgarity enough to slight a young lady on account of her poverty would never have been invited to her house again. Edna's experience had therefore been a happy one, and now both surprise and indignation were struggling hard within her. She was still standing there, growing more angry every moment, when Gladys came in from her class-room.

"Why, Edna, what *is* the matter?" For her sister's cheeks were flushed and her eyes full of angry tears.

Then the whole story was poured out, losing nothing in the recital. Here, at least, she was sure of sympathy, Gladys having always had more pride than either of her sisters. Now, to her surprise, and also to her great disappointment, her sister listened very coolly to her story, seeming, indeed, entirely unmoved thereby.

"Well, Edna, it wasn't very pleasant, was it? But it is just what I should have expected from Mrs. Savin. She was a vulgar woman, trying hard to get into society, but not succeeding, with all her money. Don't you remember how Mademoiselle used to object at first to your associating with Laura on account of

her mother, and how hard you had to beg before succeeding in getting your own way?"

"Yes, but she was more than satisfied afterwards, when she found how lovely Laura was."

"But we never visited there much, you know, although Mrs. Savin tried hard to induce us to go. So it is only what you might have expected, and I wouldn't mind it at all, Ducksie."

"Why, Gladys, I thought you would be the very one to be angry, and you don't seem to care in the very least."

"I know I used to be very foolish about these matters, Edna"—Gladys spoke very gravely now—"but when real sorrow comes, these comparative trifles sink into utter insignificance. I know it is hard for you, though; only a few months ago I should have felt just the same. But now—" She stopped abruptly, and turned away.

If anything could have been effectual in restoring Edna's equanimity, it was this avowal of Gladys. Never before had she spoken of her trouble directly to Edna, and so great was the impression made that the other affair was nearly forgotten. Only for the moment, though. By the time Eudora returned, exasperation had once more gained the upper hand, and the story was again poured out.

"It was certainly very poor taste to offer you the money," said Eudora, "though I daresay she meant it kindly. But, in what you have told me, Edna, I really cannot see that she said anything actually rude, or that even was not polite, according to her standard of politeness."

"It was not what she said," replied Edna, in a vexed tone, feeling that she had not made out a case. "It was her whole manner—but you can't tell anything about it unless you had seen the whole thing."

"I think I do understand, dear. And I know it must have been exceedingly annoying. And yet it is really and truly not worth minding, Edna. At any rate, it is past and gone, and you will do well to adopt one of my mottoes for your own, little sister, 'forgetting those things which are behind.' I find it such a help to keep that in mind; actually to forget disagreeable pasts, when the remembrance can do us no good, only taking from them whatever lesson we can, and letting the rest go. Just as the juices of some poisonous plants are extracted to use as medicines, and the remainder thrown away."

"Well," said Edna, energetically and still somewhat angrily, "I'll take the lesson of never hurting anybody's feelings, if I can possibly help it. And here goes for the rest!" And picking up a crumpled piece of paper, she tossed it vigorously into the stove. "There, it's gone!" as the paper blazed up and shriveled into ashes. "Good-bye, Mrs. Savin! I've seen the last of *you*, I hope! Come, girls, dinner's ready."

And Eudora took the lesson to herself. She might have been perplexed and troubled had she given thought the rein, and allowed it to wander unrestrained. For present and future interests seemed imperiled by the step, trifling as it seemed, that she had taken. She had perhaps alienated a kind and good friend, a friend whose help had been invaluable in the

past, and would be, possibly, more so in the future. She had, perhaps, injured her sisters' interests as well as her own, and, at least, put in jeopardy the one great pleasure of Edna's life. This and more she might have dwelt upon and brooded over until the clouds had gathered thick and dark enough to cover all the fair sky of hope. But not so had she learned her lesson.

"I did what I considered right," she thought. "And therefore I can safely leave the result with Him who sees the end from the beginning, and who will manage everything for me in the best possible manner."



## CHAPTER XXI.

Gladys and Edna were all ready when Mr. Crescent called for them.

"Lloyd had to escort his mother," he explained. "But they will join us at our meeting-place. It is but a few blocks from here, so I thought you would not mind the walk."

Crowds were hurrying in the same direction, and when the three reached their destination, it was somewhat difficult to make their way to the door. As soon as they had entered, it was locked behind them; otherwise the surging crowd might possibly have forced their way into the building. In the large bay window in the second story, were assembled Mr. and Mrs. Warringsford, Mr. Ernest with the two children, and Mrs. Parlot and Lloyd. The gentlemen rose to greet the girls, and to find them comfortable seats. Lloyd attached himself to Edna, while Logan took possession of her other side. Mr. Crescent seated Gladys beside Mrs. Parlot, and then went over to speak to Mr. and Mrs. Warringsford, leaving Mr. Ernest to divide his attentions between Gabrielle—who was looking extremely disconsolate—and the two ladies who were seated nearest him. But he seemed moody and as though his thoughts were elsewhere.

"You see," said Mr. Crescent, returning to Gladys, "we might have secured seats on that 'Tribune' below. But Mrs. Warringsford preferred this more private

place, and I think it is probably pleasanter for all of you, unless for the children."

"This is delightful," said Gladys. "Much pleasanter than outside, according to my ideas."

"But I am most sorry to find that Miss Eudora is not of the party. I supposed that we should find her here with the Warringsfords. Was not that the understanding, Miss Gladys?"

"I thought so until yesterday, Mr. Crescent, when Eudora told us that she did not intend coming. I am sorry also, but—she must take her own way, you know."

The changed attitude of the crowd below, now bending forward and gazing steadily in the one direction, betokened the approach of the procession. As the fair Queen, surrounded by her court and her sixteen beautiful maids of honor, came in sight, the people broke into a wild cheer, handkerchiefs and flags were waved, while the Queen bowed right and left in recognition of the honor paid her. Then followed the United States Marines and National Guard—afterwards Chinese, Indians, the Fire department, Caballeros, prosperity floats, et cetera, et cetera.

It was, indeed, a fine affair, and well worth seeing.

"Notice this Chinese part of the parade," said Mr. Crescent, as the immense dragon came slowly in sight, set off with the shimmer of silver, the glimmer of gold and the glitter of steel, together with the sparkle of real jewels. "The Chinese are in earnest in everything they do. That brightness and glitter is due to no tinsel paper or other pretensions—all is solid and real, just as it appears."

"It seems to me," remarked Gladys, "that the Chinese are rather popular in Los Angeles. I had quite the opposite idea before coming here."

"It is a common mistake of Eastern people that the Chinaman is not wanted in California. He *is* popular—in Los Angeles at least, as far as my observation extends. And justly so, for he is quiet and respectful in behavior, attending strictly to his own business, though taking an interest in all that concerns the prosperity of the city of his adoption. See with what dignity those men are walking beside their dragon, and what a fine appearance they make in their gorgeous silken robes. I tell you, Miss Gladys, Los Angeles would be badly off without her Chinese population, and Los Angeles has the sense to understand that, and to treat them decently."

"Yes, they seem very happy here," replied Gladys. "I am really getting quite to like our vegetable and fruit Chinaman. He seems to take an interest in our welfare, and often advises us as to what vegetables or fruit he considers it most advantageous for us to buy. He particularly likes Edna, whom he evidently regards as a mere child, and when she is not around, he asks, 'Where little Missee? She got sense, little Missee, she have.' Which does not sound very flattering to Eudora and myself, but I have no idea he means to make comparisons; he only wishes to show his partiality for Edna."

The procession was long in passing. But so varied was it, that there was no fatigue from monotony. The mixture of races and nationalities taking part therein, gave a flavor of originality to the whole, ren-

dering it entirely distinct from ordinary processions, so that, from first to last, the interest was sustained, especially with those to whom the sight was a novel one.

After all was over, full an hour elapsed before the streets were sufficiently cleared to make them comfortable for walking. A general social time was therefore indulged in, Mrs. Parlot being, as usual, the life of the party, ably seconded by Edna and Mr. Crescent. Mr. Warringsford had been obliged to leave at once, pleading an engagement. The remainder of those present were mostly silent, listening to the lively conversation of the others. Gladys had her own reasons for not being gay, though she made strenuous efforts to overcome her gloom, and by her enjoyment of the scene to prove to her friends that their kindness was appreciated. She succeeded, in so far that none but Mr. Crescent and Edna suspected anything amiss. That gentleman's deep and growing interest in all concerning her, gave him a clearness of vision causing him to penetrate beneath the surface; and apprehend the real gloom underlying the apparent brightness. Mrs. Warringsford also was more silent than usual, though never anything but kind, friendly, and considerate to all. She had given many furtive glances at her son, while the procession was passing, and with a mother's quickness of perception, had drawn her own conclusions—conclusions, however, not entirely correct.

Before the party separated, the evening's programme was arranged. They were all to meet at Mrs. Warringsford's about seven o'clock, and proceed in a body to the Pavilion—a large public building—where a

grand concert was to be given. "And where people do not go so much for the music," said Mr. Crescent, "as for the sight of the assembled multitude, the Queen and her court, and for the general scenic display."

When the girls arrived at home, Eudora was already there, preparing dinner; for her sisters had had only a hasty luncheon, she was sure, and would be likely to need their dinner earlier than usual.

"Why, Eudora," exclaimed Edna, "we had no idea you would be home by this time! And it looks as if you had been here quite a while, to judge by the advanced state of the dinner."

"My sewing gave out," replied Eudora; "so there was nothing to do but to come home. I have been here nearly an hour. I hope you have had a lovely time."

"Perfectly splendid," replied Edna. "You *ought* to have been there, Eudora. I was just wishing for you all the time."

"That was very kind of you," said her sister, smilingly. "But I had an excellent view of the procession, and feel entirely satisfied."

"Each one to her taste," said Edna shrugging her shoulders. "I hope you are going with us to-night, though. There is such a thing as carrying eccentricity too far."

Eudora laughed heartily, and even Gladys joined in.

"This is a new accusation, Edna. I was not aware that you considered me eccentric! But I shall try to prove to you that it is a false accusation, by assuring you that it is my fixed intention to accompany you all

to-night. Does that remove the suspicion from your mind?"

"Well, it is doing better, I admit. I hope you will keep it up. But since we are having dinner so early, girls, there will be a full hour after it, before it will be time to get ready for the concert. And I want you both to turn in and give me some help."

"At what, if you please, ma'am?" asked Eudora, jestingly.

"Well, you know, Mr. Crescent said that yesterday would be my harvest day. I *did* sell a good deal more than usual. But I heard several ladies speak of bringing friends to see the mosses and pressed flowers, and as I am nearly out of them, I thought if we three set to work diligently, we might make quite an assortment in an hour; especially of the mosses, of which I have plenty ready pressed. They sell better than the flowers, though I have sold a good many of those too."

Gladys and Eudora expressed their willingness to help, and after a rather hurried dinner, all set earnestly to work. At the end of an hour, a dozen beautiful cards rewarded their labors—all more or less different, according to their several tastes, Gladys taking the lead in artistic designs. Edna was more than pleased with the result.

"There's so much money in my pocket," she said, as she surveyed the fine row of cards, large and small, before her. "It is about so much clear gain. That's the beauty of it."

At half-past seven, all were assembled in Mrs. Warringsford's parlor, with the exception of Mr. War-

ringsford, who had not returned, and, of course, of Mrs. Parlot and Lloyd, who were to join them at the Pavilion.

"We need not be in any special hurry," said Mr. Crescent, "as we have reserved seats. A quarter of an hour hence will be time enough."

Gabrielle had been hanging about her father, begging him to allow her to accompany the party; but he remained firm in his refusal.

"I will not take you out at night into such a crowd, daughter," he said, "so it is useless teasing about it. Home is the only proper place for twelve-year-old girls."

"But, papa, you said you would take me to lots of places," she sobbed out.

"So I did, Gabrielle. And so I will—in the daytime; but not at night. So say no more about it, little daughter."

Gabrielle was too well-trained not to obey, but she sobbed bitterly, and was about leaving the room, when Eudora, drawing the distressed child to her side, with a few whispered words calmed the outburst, and soon restored her to composure.

"The cars will take us within a few steps of the Pavilion," said Mr. Ernest. "A carriage is hardly safe amid such crowds. I suppose, Mr. Crescent, it is about time for us to leave."

It was natural that the son should give his arm to his mother, his father being absent. Eudora followed with Edna, while Gladys brought up the rear with Mr. Crescent—through no design of her own, but simply because that gentleman took it as a matter of

course, and she was too kind-hearted to disappoint him, and too really indifferent at present to care, on her own account, one way or another.

When they entered, the hall was already crowded to its utmost capacity, gallery included. Mr. Ernest had explained that their seats were not all in a row, but that he had been obliged to take three in one row, and three in another, while Mrs. Parlot and Lloyd had two near by. Seating his mother, it was then most natural to hand Eudora in next. after which there was nothing to be done but to seat himself beside her. Gladys and Edna and Mr. Crescent had already entered the seats back of them. Mrs. Warringsford seemed much pleased with the way matters were arranged.

"I am so glad to have you beside me, dear," she whispered. "I almost felt to-day that you wanted to give us the slip. I quite missed you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Warringsford," replied Eudora, with rather a sinking of heart. "It is very good of you to want me with you, and I am happy to be with you, I assure you."

There was no time for more, as the music began, continuing with only one interval until the close. Meantime Edna was going through her own experience. Exactly behind her and Gladys were seated Mrs. Savin and Laura. They had come in after Edna's entrance, and had not as yet perceived her.

"Laura, do look," said her mother in a loud whisper, which Edna heard even above the music. "Is not that Mrs. Warringsford from New York?"



"I'm sure I don't know, mamma. Who is Mrs. Warringsford?"

"Why, Laura, you must surely have heard of her. She was at the very tip-top of New York society a few years ago. I remember now hearing of her coming to Los Angeles. I wonder who that pretty, stylish-looking girl is beside her—" as Eudora turned towards Mrs. Warringsford.

But, just then, Edna, who knew that Laura would recognize her sooner or later, and the more said the worse it would be, turned around and smiled at her friend, though feeling somewhat confused.

"Edna," exclaimed Laura, in a delighted whisper, "I am so glad!" And she was about to say more, when her mother interposed.

"Attend to the music, my dear. Good evening, Miss Grayston; I am sorry Laura cannot talk with you further, but it will not do to interfere with other people's enjoyment." Which was, of course, true; but it was a little strange she had not thought of it sooner.

Half an hour passed, and Mrs. Savin, who had been making her own observations, and had noticed Edna leaning forward and speaking to Eudora, now said to Laura, in a very low whisper: "Who is she with, my dear?"

"I suppose, with that lady you were speaking about," replied Laura, in the same guarded tone. "That is one of her sisters sitting beside Mrs. Warringsford."

"Beside Mrs. Warringsford!" said Mrs. Savin, un-

consciously raising her voice in her excitement. "Not possible, my dear."

Laura nudged her mother forcibly, but Edna had already heard.

As soon as the twenty minutes' interval was announced, Mrs. Savin leaned forward to Gladys, who was seated next to Edna.

"Miss Grayston, do pray excuse me for not recognizing you sooner. But you are all so grown and improved. And is that your sister Miss Eudora? What a beautiful girl she is! I must really manage to speak to her before we leave."

Now, Gladys had not caught any of the conversation going on behind her, and was, therefore, much surprised at Mrs. Savin's cordiality.

"Edna misjudged her," she thought. "What an imagination that child has!"

So Gladys responded with even more cordiality than was usual with her; as a kind of compensation for the injustice she felt they had all been doing to Mrs. Savin.

Meanwhile, Laura and Edna had been improving the time by getting in as many words in a limited space as girls usually do.

"I am so sorry I cannot go to see you again," said Laura, regretfully: "but we leave on Saturday, and mamma says we have so many engagements." Just then, noticing her mother in close and apparently cordial conversation with Gladys, it struck her that possibly matters were now altered—for even the most unworldly child is apt to have an apprehension, though perhaps not a comprehension, of the worldly mother's

motives for caution. "But I will ask her again, Edna."

Mrs. Savin, who seemed to have ears in all directions, caught at the words, and, turning to Edna, said: "Certainly, Miss Edna; she shall go to see you before leaving. She is engaged every afternoon and evening—but she can go in the morning, and I shall see that she does so."

And Laura, accustomed to her mother's sudden change of plans, cared only for the fact that the interdiction against communication with her friend was removed, and rejoiced accordingly.

"I can come to-morrow, I know I can," she said gleefully. Then the music re-commenced, and conversation ceased.

When the concert was ended, Mrs. Savin made an effort to speak with Eudora; but being delayed by persons at the end of the row, the lady could not reach her in time, much to her vexation, as she had hoped through her means to procure an introduction to Mrs. Warringsford. Edna might easily have managed to detain Eudora, being close to her, but she made no attempt to do so, guessing instinctively at Mrs. Savin's motives.

## CHAPTER XXII.

When the girls returned home—Edna, of course, returning with Mrs. Warringsford—Gladys gave Eudora an account of her meeting with Mrs. Savin; and Edna not being present to give her own version of the affair, both sisters felt that she had—though, doubtless, unintentionally—misrepresented Mrs. Savin. Had there been no sequel, there might long have lingered in their minds a doubt in regard to Edna's entire reliability as a faithful narrator of events. Upon such slender grounds is sometimes a character gained or lost.

"Mr. Ernest and you did not seem to have much to say to each other," remarked Gladys, with a keen look at her sister.

"No, I think neither of us was disposed to conversation," replied Eudora, calmly. And Gladys said no more.

Next morning, Edna ran in, full of eagerness to tell her story. Breakfast was ready before she could begin, and as they sat down, Gladys said somewhat severely, "Edna, see where your imagination carried you! Mrs. Savin was simply charming to me last night. I never saw her more so in our palmiest days. She wanted to insist upon sending a carriage round to take us driving this morning, and afterwards to have lunch with them at their hotel. Of course I had to tell her we were all engaged in the morning, and she seemed really disappointed, and was just as

lovely as possible. I do wish, Edna, that for the future you would curb your imagination, and not see things which have no existence in reality!"

"Do you?" retorted Edna, a mixture of indignation and triumph sparkling in her eyes. "Do you, indeed? And is that your opinion also, Miss Eudora?" in the most sarcastic manner possible.

"I know you did not mean it, dear," replied her sister, kindly but firmly. "Still, I agree with Gladys, that it is best not to give reins to one's imagination, as it is apt to lead one beyond the actual facts, and at least to verge upon untruthfulness."

Indignation had for the moment the upper hand of triumph.

"You might as well both of you inform me that I told lies!" she burst forthwith. "Just as well! And I have the greatest mind in the world not to tell you what I intended—"

She paused, and angry tears welled up in her eyes. Only for the moment, however. Edna was really good-tempered, though quick—besides, she held the winning card, and this knowledge, as is usually the case, exercised a decidedly soothing influence. So, after a minute, during which time both sisters had an uncomfortable feeling that they had been too severe, Edna blinked back the tears, took a drink of water, then said:

"Well, girls, I do think you are both very hard on me, without any reason, either. I had a great mind not to tell you anything about it—but I *will*—and then see who's right—you or I!"

So the whole story came out. As it proceeded, it was impossible not to perceive the motives actuating

Mrs. Savin, convicted as she was out of her own mouth. Eudora's surprise, and Gladys' indignation and disgust, were all that Edna could desire, and her triumph was complete.

"It is too bad we misjudged you so, Ducksie," said Gladys. "But you must own that appearances were against you, and even your meek Eudora blamed you."

"Yes, I did indeed, little sister. But it has taught me a lesson which I hope never to forget."

"What lesson, if you please, ma'am?" asked Edna, with mock humility.

"'Judge not,'" replied Eudora. "That is one of our dear Teacher's lessons. I don't yet know it by heart, but I *will*, sooner or later; and what has now happened will be a big stepping-stone in that upward direction. So be comforted, little sister; and look at the bright side of this disagreeable affair."

"Well," said Edna, slowly, "it's all right, of course, Eudora, and I'm glad if I have been a help to you. All the same," and there was a roguish twinkle in her eye—"it was *pretty hard on the stepping-stone!*"

About ten that morning, Laura Savin alighted from an elegant carriage, and ran smiling into the store.

"Just think," she said, after greetings had been exchanged, "I can stay two hours, if I won't be in your way, and we can keep store together. Won't it be fun?"

"Yes, indeed, Laura. And, of course, you won't be in the way."

"Then I must send back the carriage, and tell the man to call for me at noon."

A charming two hours the friends had together. A number of strangers dropped in, and the sight of those bright, merry girls, who looked as though they were playing at store-keeping, loosened more than one purse-string, inducing purchases where none had been intended.

"Isn't it fun keeping store!" exclaimed Laura, more than once. "What a lot of money you must have, Edna! Why, you have gained more than ten dollars since I have been here."

"Yes, but it is not all clear gain," replied Edna.

And she thereupon explained to her friend something of the interior workings of business, making her understand that what the article had cost them must be deducted from the price paid them for it.

"O, that's too bad, said Laura, who had really never given the matter a thought. "Why don't you charge more, then?"

"I am afraid, in that case, our customers would all leave us, and go where they could get cheaper goods."

"O, well, but I think it's fun anyway. At least I should, if I could be always with you. I forgot to tell you that mamma was coming with me this morning, to see if she could not persuade you to change your mind, and at least one of you to go out driving with us; but company came in, and I had to leave without her. She said she would be here to-morrow morning, though. So I shall see you again, at any rate, you darling girl."

"I am so glad, Laura. It almost seems as if we were home in New York again, to have you here."

"I'd be perfectly satisfied to stay here and keep

store with you all winter, and I only wish I could. But, Edna, aren't you going to the athletic games and races in the park this afternoon?"

"No, we are not going, Laura. Mr. Warringsford said he did not think we would care much for that exhibition. But we are going to-night, of course."

"O, of course, that will be the finest sight of all, they say. But what has Mr. Warringsford to do with your proceedings?" asked Laura, remembering her mother's injunction to find out whatever she could as to her friend's connection with the Warringsfords. "Are you going with him?"

"The Warringsfords live next door," replied Edna, not displeased to be able to add, "and are our most intimate friends here."

"O!" said Laura, who really cared little for such things herself, though mentally making a note for her mother's benefit. "Do you go everywhere with them?"

"They are very kind in taking us out with them wherever they think we would like to go," replied Edna, who, to do her justice, cared as little as her friend, under ordinary circumstances.

And so their conversation went on, interrupted occasionally by customers, until the two hours were ended, and the friends parted, with the understanding that they would meet on the morrow.

In the evening, all met as before at Mrs. Warringsford's. Mr. Ernest had consented that Gabrielle and even little Logan might go upon this occasion, it being a sight peculiarly delightful to children, and one which they would never forget, should circumstances prevent



their ever seeing it again. Mrs. Warringsford excused herself, pleading fatigue, but saying that Mrs. Parlot would be her representative at the meeting-place.

Naturally, Mr. Ernest took Logan in charge. The child begged that Edna would take his other hand, and the request being seconded by his father, Edna, nothing loth, complied. Gabrielle constituted herself Eudora's companion, and there was nothing to do but for Gladys to follow with Mr. Crescent—an arrangement which, unlike many such arrangements, suited all parties exactly. Edna, however, had a kind of feeling that she was usurping Eudora's place, and that Mr. Ernest was not quite pleased in consequence—an idea suggested by that gentleman's expression of countenance, which appeared to her even sterner than usual. But she was slightly mistaken as to its cause.

The pageant, "The Lands of the Sun," was grand indeed. The brilliantly illuminated chariots, temples, pagodas, gondolas, the white elephant, the Car of Juggernaut, the Queen of Sheba appearing before Solomon, the carrying off of Helen, Belshazzar's feast, the Sphinx, the Fire Worshipers, and other designs, were produced in such magnificence and with so much attention to detail, as not only to be beautiful to the eye, but valuable as object-lessons to young and old.

"To-morrow will be the children's parade," said Mr. Crescent on their way home. "A procession of all the children belonging to the public schools pass in review before the Queen. There are some special exercises, and I believe each school is presented with a flag by the president of La Fiesta. I hardly think you

will particularly care for this spectacle, but if you have the slightest desire to witness it, pray command me—I am entirely at your service.”

Gladys assured him she had no such desire, and Mr. Crescent continued, “then this ends our programme until Saturday, as you will probably not care to see the display of fireworks at one of the parks, and I am very sure you will not wish to attend the Queen’s ball at a later hour.”

“Hardly,” said Gladys. “But, Mr. Crescent, we have much enjoyed what we have seen, and are very grateful for all the trouble you have taken to give us pleasure.”

And Edna joined in the thanks, though she felt as if she might have been consulted as to her wishes in the matter. The next morning at breakfast she said:

“I just think it is too bad Mr. Ernest did not invite me to go with him and the children to see the parade this afternoon. But he didn’t, so there! Of course, though, you’ll say it is all for the best, Eudora.”

“Of course I shall,” replied her sister, smilingly. “I have not the slightest doubt of it, Edna; but I am sorry for your disappointment.”

“There is one thing,” said Edna, “I shall see Laura this morning. But I am afraid her mother will be with her. That will spoil all. And I really don’t know what to say to her if she insists on our going driving with her, or lunching, or this, that and the other! Things are awfully contrary in this world sometimes, whatever you may say, Eudora.”

“Don’t worry over them until they actually come,

at any rate," said her sister. "It is a bad plan to cross your bridge before you come to it. We magnify our troubles ten-fold by going over and over them in imagination, either before or after they occur. I speak from experience, for I well remember what I used to suffer in that way. And now, how much happier I am since I have committed all my interests, past, present and future, into the hands of our dear Heavenly Father, who understands all about it, and will manage everything in the very best way for His obedient, trusting children."

It was more for Gladys than for Edna that Eudora thus spoke. The trouble, which of late had appeared to be subsiding; seemed now again to be getting the upper hand, and the past night had been one of the worst yet spent. She now arose abruptly and left the room.

"Is Gladys worse?" asked Edna, in alarm, as she noticed for the first time her sister's appearance when leaving. The real dread chased instantly all imaginary troubles away.

"She was restless again last night, and seems more unhappy than has been the case of late. But we must still keep praying and trusting, dear, and sooner or later all will be right again."

"O, dear!" sighed Edna. "This is worse than anything. I remember once when I was grumbling about something, Mademoiselle told me that if I fretted about nothing, I should soon have something real to fret about. And I just believe it's true! But there goes the store door. It is pretty early for customers, though the more the better."

So saying, she hastened away, and before long found herself in the midst of a stream of business. This was the very busiest morning she had yet had, and her sales were many and remunerative. At odd times within the past two days, the girls had all helped in adding to their stock of mosses, shells and pressed flowers, and Edna's pile of money grew apace. But no Laura made her appearance. Late in the afternoon, the postman brought a note from her, stating that her mother having received a telegram announcing the serious illness of her father, they were obliged to leave at once, and were to start within the hour for home. The note was hasty, but loving, and Edna felt both disappointed and relieved.

"Eudora was right," she thought. "It was no use to worry. Perhaps I'll remember the lesson another time."

In the afternoon she was again busy with customers, for there were many who did not care specially to witness the athletic sports; so that, before the day ended, she had ample cause for being glad that she had kept the store open.

Next morning at breakfast, Edna said:

"Eudora, Mrs. Warringsford asked me to tell you, with her love—I want to get it exactly right—that she requests the pleasure of your company this afternoon at the grand flower parade, and that she will be much disappointed—no, *greatly* disappointed, if you should refuse her invitation. There! I think I have given the message correctly."

"Mrs. Warringsford is very kind," replied Eudora, "and I shall be happy to accept her invitation."

"Well, I am glad, but rather surprised," said Edna, who was in one of her pert moods, "for you have been so queer of late that I had no idea whether you would accept or not. Perhaps you and Gladys are both coming to your senses at last. The sooner the better."

As usual, Edna was sorry the moment she had uttered her heedless speech. Gladys changed color, and almost immediately left the room. Eudora gave her sister a reproachful look, though not on her own account, and Edna, smitten with remorse for Gladys' sake, resolved, as had been the case so many, many times before, that she would be more careful in future.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

About half past one o'clock, all met as before at Mrs. Warringsford's. Mr. Ernest this time took charge of both children, leaving Eudora to escort his mother, while Gladys and Edna fell to Mr. Crescent's care. Edna privately hoped that Logan would again claim her, but he did not; she had therefore the uncomfortable feeling of being one of the three which makes no company, herself the "no company" one. However, all was forgotten when they were fairly seated—with Lloyd in devoted attendance—and the grand parade began to pass before their delighted eyes. This was worth all the other sights put together—so the adults of the party declared—the children's preference was for the more gaudy pageant, the "Lands of the Sun."

Words are inadequate to describe the spectacle. Nowhere else could such a scene be witnessed. The extraordinary profusion of flowers of every variety—chariots, trains, horses, coaches, buggies, bicycles, vehicles of every form and description, so smothered in roses, lilies, tulips, pansies, daisies, smilax, in fact, flowers and vines of every kind, that nothing could be seen of their frame-work, even the wheels, in many cases being concealed by myrtle. Squads of children, almost hidden in a mass of colors, horsemen dressed in green, purple and red blossoms, while some of the vehicles were devoted solely to one color or flower, the conceit extending even to the driver's necktie and whip,

and to the parasol of his female companion. And the surprising part of the scene was, that, covering miles as the procession did, there was scarcely a single duplicate in the whole parade.

"Here ends our entertainment," said Mr. Crescent, after escorting the girls home, and entering for a little social chat. "There is a concert to-night at the Pavilion previous to the masquerade, but Mr. Ernest and I concluded that you would hardly care to attend, as it probably much resembles the former one. But now, Miss Edna, we have been somewhat neglecting business—at least I have—during these days of pleasure. May I ask what success you have had since we last posted up the books together, a week ago to-day, I believe."

"Indeed you may," said Edna, who had been eagerly waiting for him to ask the question. "Have you time to look over the accounts now?"

He took out his watch.

"O, yes; there is a good hour before my dinner-time. So bring them on, Miss Edna, and we shall see whether you are keeping up your character as an expert accountant."

Edna laughed gleefully as she laid the book open before him.

"Don't tell the girls yet how much I have made this week," she said. "I want them to guess. Now, girls, how much have I made within the past few days from the sale of fancy articles alone—I mean those we have made ourselves, including Gladys' paintings, so that the money is almost clear gain? Now guess."

"Ten dollars," hazarded Gladys.

"Fifteen," suggested Eudora.

"Guess again, both of you."

"Twenty," ventured Gladys.

"Twenty-five," said Eudora.

And Edna, anxious not to weaken the final effect by any further gradual leading up to it, announced slowly and impressively, "It is forty-two dollars."

The astonishment of all came up fully to her expectations, and great were the congratulations over her business tact and ability.

"Yes, it's pretty good," she said, quite complacent over the praises so freely administered. "I really think I have done remarkably well. I suppose I have a taking way with the public."

"Take care," warned Gladys, smilingly. "Pride sometimes has a fall, you know."

"Bother falls," laughed Edna, whose high spirits, once in the ascendant, sometimes carried her rather too far. "Here's the hard cash, any way, and that can't have a fall, however it may be with me. But I don't propose to fall either. And the rest of the sales amount to a good deal, too, but they are not yet all counted. Hurrah for stores in general, and this little book-store in particular!"

"Well, Miss Edna," said Mr. Crescent, as he finally arose to depart, "I heartily congratulate you upon your success. Long may it last! Though you must remember that in the nature of the case, you cannot expect such windfalls very often."

On Monday morning, as Gladys and Eudora sat at breakfast, Edna, who had gone into the store for some



purpose, came running back with pale cheeks and frightened eyes.

"It's gone, girls! it's gone!" she fairly gasped out; then threw herself into a chair unable for the moment to stand.

"What has gone?" both exclaimed together.

"The money! All the money! Every cent!"

"O, you have only mislaid it," said Gladys. "Let us go and see about it, Eudora."

"Yes, come," said Edna, recovering herself in a measure and leading the way; "then see whether I have mislaid it or not."

A startling sight met their eyes as they entered. The entire lower sash of the window had been removed, without breaking, and stood on the floor inside. The money-drawer was wide open and the contents gone. Not another thing had apparently been touched.

The girls looked at each other in dismay.

"Didn't I tell you!" said Edna; and there was something of triumph in her tone, instantly, however, changing to a woeful, "O dear! Isn't it dreadful! Just as we were going to be so well off, and I was going to take lessons in—Why Gladys! this is just what you prophesied! I hope you are satisfied now!"

"I prophesied?" said Gladys, bewildered. "What *do* you mean, Edna?"

"Don't you remember what you said about pride having a fall. And sure enough, here *is* a fall with a vengeance!"

"O," said Gladys, light dawning. "Why, child,

that was a joke. Of course I never dreamed of anything like this."

"It seems to me," said Eudora, "that instead of standing here discussing the matter, we had better be doing something to try and recover the money."

"That is exactly what I was thinking," said Gladys.

"You have the wisest head among us, Eudora. What do you think we had best do?"

Eudora was silent a moment, while her sisters looked carefully in and around the money drawer, to see if the thief might not have left some trace behind him.

Then Eudora spoke. "The only thing I can think of at present, is to send at once a note to Mr. Crescent, asking him to call at his earliest convenience—perhaps we might add—on important business."

"Yes," said Edna. "Of course that's the very thing. Being a lawyer, he will know what to do. Will you write, Gladys?"

"I must go to my school-room at once, so you had better do it yourself, Edna. You have the most time, and are besides the most deeply interested party—though, as far as that is concerned, we are all pretty much in the same box!"

About ten o'clock, in walked Mr. Crescent. He was in a somewhat excited state of mind, as he feared—he knew not what. Edna had left everything as she had found it, wishing that he should see the exact state of affairs.

He looked grave and troubled when the story was told, though to a certain extent he felt relieved.

"I ought to have done the proper thing—or what I considered the proper thing—when you first came here to live," he said. "I was several times on the point of ordering shutters to be put up, not only here, but also on the other windows; but as you all made objections, I felt I had not the right to insist. There was my mistake. I *had* the right, as being your father's friend, your business advisor, your guardian indeed. Another day shall not pass without its being done—though it may seem to you like locking the stable-door when the horse is gone. Where is Miss Gladys?"

"In her school-room with her class. She is always teaching at this hour, you know."

"Yes, of course, I forgot this was Monday. Now, Miss Edna, if you will kindly go and take her place for a short time, while she comes here, I shall be obliged to you. I want to have a little conversation with her."

When Gladys came in, Mr. Crescent was carefully fitting the window sash into its place, concealing as well as possible the fact of there being anything amiss.

"One moment, Miss Gladys. There, that is all right, I think; at least, it will do for the present. By and bye I shall send up a carpenter."

He came over, and took her hand in both of his.

"Miss Gladys, this is all my fault."

"Your fault, Mr. Crescent!" Gladys said in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"In the first place, I ought to have insisted upon having the shutters put on, as you will remember I proposed doing. Then, on Saturday night, I should

have taken the money home with me, preparatory to depositing it in the bank this morning. I can not imagine how it happened to escape my mind."

"Indeed, Mr. Crescent, you shall not blame yourself in the very least. You must remember that we absolutely refused to have the shutters put up, like the obstinate girls that we were. Besides which, Edna had no business to leave the money in the drawer; she has often been told not to do so, but her success of late has completely turned her head. So you see, there was no fault of yours about it."

"Most kind of you to say so, my dear Miss Gladys. But—the fact is, you all need a protector—a guardian"—he was speaking hurriedly now—"one, I mean, who would always be at hand."

But Gladys, in sudden unaccountable fright, broke in with, "Yes, I do really think we would be the better of having a great big dog! We could shut him up in the store, you know, and he would give us warning of attempted attacks. Don't you think so, Mr. Crescent?"

Instead of answering at once, that gentleman took out his handkerchief, and wiped the perspiration from his brow. When he spoke at last, his voice was completely altered.

"It might be a good idea, Miss Gladys. But we are wasting time, as I have no doubt you are anxious to return to your scholars. What I wished specially to say to you was this. In my judgment it will be best to say nothing of this robbery to anyone. It would be exceedingly unpleasant to have your name in the papers, with all manner of surmises and rumors

floating about. Besides it would call attention to the fact of money being kept so insecurely, and might incite others to a like attempt."

"O by all means, Mr. Crescent," said Gladys, eagerly, "do keep it out of the papers! It would be far better to lose the money than to be dragged into public notice in that dreadful way. It would be simply terrible."

"Of course I knew you would feel so, Miss Gladys. But I trust we may not have to lose the money either. I happen to have an acquaintance among the detectives of this place, who once did me good service, though not in a similar case. I will get him to manage the matter so that it shall be kept entirely private. Have no fears, Miss Gladys."

"Thank you, Mr. Crescent," said Gladys, gratefully. And with a remorseful feeling for the wound which she knew in her heart she had dealt him, she added, "We are quite sure that our interests are always safe in your hands. We are very fortunate girls to have such a good, kind friend."

Then hastily saying good-bye she made her exit, leaving Mr. Crescent to await Edna's return with a much lighter heart than had been the case a moment before. Later in the day he returned, accompanied by a carpenter, who speedily put to right the damaged window, and also took measurements for shutters for that and the other windows, all of which were only on one side of the house—that looking into the street.

It was a very different Edna from the usual merry, saucy, laughing girl who sat down to dinner that evening. Sad, silent, downcast, with a suspicion of

tears in her eyes; could contrast be greater? And not all Eudora's and even Gladys' efforts at liveliness could change her attitude.

"Edna, dear," said Eudora, when they two were washing the dishes, Gladys having left the room, "I wouldn't take this matter so much to heart, if I were you. We may recover the money, but if not, we can do without it. A good part of it is over and above what we had calculated on, and we are now doing so well that we can afford to lose it. So be comforted, dear."

"It is not the money alone," said Edna, dashing away a tear. "It is because I have been such an idiot—first in boasting so much of my capabilities and general brilliancy, and then for my obstinacy in refusing to take Gladys' advice as to putting away the money in a safe place until Monday. I insisted on leaving it in the store, and was even saucy about it—it was awfully good of her not to remind me of my badness. Yes, the whole thing has been my fault. I deserve every bit of the punishment; but it is too bad Gladys and you have to suffer for my folly."

"As far as I am concerned, dear, the money loss has but little effect. And Gladys is even more indifferent. I wish she were less so! And as to yourself, little sister, the thing is over and done. Take the lesson from it of being less confident and boastful and obstinate—I am only using your own words, dear—and then let the past be past. Cast it entirely from you, as you did the Mrs. Savin affair. Remember that successes are built upon failures, and that

they only learn the secret of success, who have learned the lesson of failure."

"Yes," said Edna, still gloomily, "Of course it is all true. But you see—the fact is, Eudora, I didn't do one bit of good to-day. I had not the heart to put any vim into it; I know I lost several sales in consequence. People coming in, as they often do, just from curiosity—though they nearly always end by buying something or other—seeing a grumpy, cross, indifferent person, went off without buying anything; so just when we are in need of making money, I let the chances slip."

"Well, dear, make up your mind that it won't be so to-morrow. Start on a new day as though the unpleasant past had never been; and we will both use our talisman to get the money back."

"O, I never thought of that!" said Edna, looking more hopeful—for she had great faith in the efficacy of Eudora's prayers. "Perhaps we shall get it back after all! But who do you think was in the store yesterday, Eudora? Why, but Tony's father, on his way home to dinner, looking ever so respectable and nice! He came in actually to buy a newspaper! I think it was an excuse to let us see how well he was doing; but I am sure he was disappointed that neither you nor Gladys was here."

"I hope you were not grumpy to *him*?" asked Eudora, anxiously.

"O, but I am afraid I was," said Edna, ruefully. "For he seemed disappointed, and did not appear nearly so bright when he left as when he came in. I was sorry the moment he shut the door behind him."

Eudora looked vexed. "O, Edna! And we did

so want to encourage him, until he should be thoroughly established in steady-going ways. It is not yet dark. I shall run over there a moment, and take them that soup that was left from dinner. A little talk with him will help set matters right again, I hope."





## CHAPTER XXIV.

The committee who had been put in charge of Tony's family had not been idle. Theirs was not merely a nominal office, as is too often the case with those appointed to be lay-helpers in the church. The young men made honest efforts to assist the man back into paths of sobriety, and to find him remunerative employment.

The young women made similar efforts with the wife, and also attended to the necessities of the family until the parents should be in a better position to take the burden upon themselves.

Success did not at first reward their efforts, and perhaps with the easy discouragement of youth, the attempt might have been abandoned when the second relapse caused the man to lose his place, had not their pastor come to the rescue with words of encouragement and cheer; and their efforts began afresh. Finally a measure of success rewarded them; the man had kept his present position for a month, and great were the hopes concerning him.

Mrs. Starr, Tony's mother, was not so hard to influence. The shock of her child's death had temporarily checked her habits, and kindly, continued interest in her welfare, stimulated her to fresh hopes for herself and her children, and helped her to persevere in the new life upon which she had entered. With her also there were occasional discouraging relapses; but they were becoming fewer and less prolonged, and

the children were beginning to learn, for the first time what it was to have a mother.

Just as Eudora entered with the soup, she heard Tony say, in a sobbing and yet determined voice:

"No, pop, I won't do it; I won't do it, pop."

Then, as he caught sight of Eudora, he ran joyfully to her, exclaiming,

"O, here's my teacher!"

His father, who had apparently been holding out a bottle to the boy, now hastily slipped it under the table. He had a shame-faced, down-cast expression, very different from the bright, straightforward look he had of late been wearing. Mrs. Starr had evidently been crying; she hastily wiped her eyes, and offered a seat to Eudora.

"Thank you; I can't stay long," said Eudora, "for it is getting dark. But we have just had dinner, and this soup was so nice I thought you might all enjoy some of it. Mr. Starr, that building you are working on"—he was a stone-mason—"is getting on nicely. I have not seen it for a few days, but I shall pass that way to-morrow morning"—having suddenly made up her mind to that effect—"and will take particular notice of the part you are engaged upon. One is always more interested in any thing when a person one is acquainted with has something to say to it."

The man brightened up. He began to speak about his work with animation; and Eudora knew certainly, as she bade them goodbye, that a critical point had been passed, and the danger was over for the present.

The following morning, Eudora went three blocks out of her way in order to keep her promise. Mr.

Starr was evidently on the watch for her, and came forward smiling with pleasure. He pointed out proudly the part on which he was at work, and, after a few pleasant words from Eudora, returned to his post with the comfortable feeling that some one was taking an interest in his success, and a determination that that kindly interest should never be misplaced.

But Eudora did more. She made it her business to see one of the young men of the committee with whom she was slightly acquainted, and rousing anew his interest in Mr. Starr's welfare, had him promise that he would stop from time to time at the building at which the man was at work and give him a word of kindly encouragement, so that he might feel that he had friends who would be glad of his success and grieved at his failure.

Day after day passed, and no tidings of the lost money. Edna's high spirits were gone, for the moment at least, as she daily and nightly reckoned in her mind the many things the sixty-seven dollars would have done for them.

"All Gladys' beautiful paintings gone for nothing," she would think over and over again. "All those pretty things I spent so much time and pains over—gone—lots of magazines, newspapers, pads, pencils, books—gone for nothing. All my own fault, too. And just to think what that money would have done! No use now for me to try to take lessons in anything. I'll only be a little storekeeper for the rest of my life! And I deserve it, too!"

When people give imagination the rein, it usually carries them to an unintended distance. Edna at first

took a certain kind of pleasure in these exaggerations; then they became more and more real as she encouraged them, until, finally, the wonders the lost money would have procured had increased to such proportions that ten times the amount would hardly have sufficed.

The following Friday, when Eudora went to her sewing at Mrs. Warringsford's, it seemed to her that her friend treated her with unusual coolness. She was, of course—being a lady—as polite as ever, but there was a nameless something in her manner which a sensitive nature, such as Eudora's, was quick to detect. When Gabrielle returned from school, she ran in to Eudora full of a great piece of news.

"O, Miss Eudora, do you know that papa is going to Europe this very week! and maybe he'll be gone for three months, and maybe longer! and isn't it too bad!—just as spring has come, and he could take us lots of excursions in my vacation! I have been so looking forward to it. It's just too bad! I really think it is!"

Mrs. Warringsford, who at that moment was passing through the room, stopped and said, in an unusually stiff manner: "Gabrielle, don't let me hear you talking such nonsense. Your father has been speaking of going to Europe for a year or two past. If you act in this way, you will make him uncomfortable and unhappy in going."

"O, I won't to him, Grandma!" said the little girl, surprised at Mrs. Warringsford's unusual tone. "Of course I won't! But I do wish he would take me with him!"

"That would be utterly impossible, Gabrielle; so let me hear no more of such foolishness."

The poor child looked distressed as her grandmother left the room.

"Grandma never speaks to me like that," she said, with tears in her eyes. "I expect she's worried because papa is going away, for I think she was crying this morning. But I wish she wouldn't be vexed with me!"

Eudora did her best to comfort the child, but she felt sad herself, and her efforts were not entirely successful. A cloud hung over her all through the day, and it was with a somewhat heavy heart that she lay down to rest that night. For what innumerable kindnesses was she and were all of them indebted to Mrs. Warringsford! What an invaluable help had been her affection and sympathy! Were they now to lose it all? And was she destined to bring sorrow into the home that had sheltered and blessed them? It was natural that she should feel it keenly, and for a time the tears coursed freely down her cheeks. But her Friend, her Comforter, was close at hand, and only waiting for the listening ear, to pour therein His heavenly consolation. And now she hearkened, and the comfort came.

"I have been looking at consequences," she thought, "forgetting, as many times before, that I have nothing to do with them. I have followed the guidance of my Leader, I truly believe, as far as I recognized it to be such, and now I will leave the rest in His safe hands."

And resolutely wiping away the tears, with her nightly song upon her lips, she fell asleep.

A few weeks passed, and Edna, aided by Eudora's wise counsels, was becoming reconciled to her loss, although there were times when her inward lamentations were almost as great as ever.

Mr. Ernest Warringsford had started on his European journey, leaving a sad household behind. For some time after his departure, Eudora had to endure that subtle change of atmosphere which caused her to feel, in some indescribable way, that she was an individual, apart from the others, and no longer an actual member of the family. She felt it even with Gabrielle—for children are quick to catch the status of their elders, though with often no idea as to causes, or being indeed conscious of change in themselves or others. Eudora kept calmly on her way, apparently oblivious to any difference in her position or surroundings—calm, sweet and helpful as ever. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the chillness passed away, and one day, Eudora, with a thankful heart, awoke to the realization that she was again in the warm atmosphere of family love, and no longer outside in the cold.

One afternoon, Gladys was feeling unusually sad. The haunting grief had come closer than ever, and clad in more vivid colors. It was towards evening, and she had taken Edna's place, while the latter went on an errand—Eudora had not yet returned. It was past their usual hour for customers, although a stray one might happen in at any hour before closing.

Gladys sat behind the counter, book in hand, but not reading. Her thoughts were far away, a look of distress was upon her countenance—a look almost of despair. Imagination had broken loose from its

bounds, and was taking revenge for long continued restraint. Would ever this haunting memory die? Die, never to know a resurrection! A resurrection at a moment when its ghostly apparition would be farthest from her thoughts, and well-nigh drive her wild with terror? There are tidal waves of grief—waves which sweep away all before them, and efforts are vain to stem the torrent. Such a time was this, and Gladys never recalled the half hour she now passed, without a thrill of horror.

She did not hear the store door open, nor did she move until a voice aroused her to present recollection. She started to her feet with a wild idea of escaping into the adjoining room, but it was too late—Mr. Crescent stood before her.

"My dear Miss Gladys," he exclaimed in a tone of the deepest concern, "you are ill! I am sure you must be very ill! Do let me get you something to take, or summon a doctor!"

The shocked look in his face had a strong effect in restoring her composure, at least to the extent of enabling her to make a mighty effort in that direction.

"I am not ill, Mr. Crescent. Only some distressing circumstances came into my mind more vividly than usual, and" —she paused, hardly knowing what to say.

But Mr. Crescent was not satisfied. Never had he seen such a look on Gladys' countenance; years seemed to have passed over it—it was haggard and drawn. But she showed such evident reluctance to further questioning that he thought it best to let the

matter drop, and taking a seat, began to enter into conversation with a view of diverting her mind. At first she seemed feverishly eager to second his efforts, but gradually she became more and more abstracted, and finally he felt that his attempt at diversion was a decided failure. So he took another tack.

"Miss Gladys," he said suddenly, after a moment's silence, "would you not like to do an act of charity?"

Gladys looked surprised.

"Is any friend of yours in trouble, Mr. Crescent?"

Her heart made answer, "myself," but now she had gathered strength sufficient resolutely to turn her thoughts from her own case and prepare to throw her sympathies into another channel.

"I can hardly say 'friend,' and yet I am slightly acquainted with the family. They are almost neighbors of yours, living only about one block away. They have lately come to this city, so there would be no impropriety in your calling on them if you felt so disposed."

"But I do not feel so disposed, Mr. Crescent—by no manner of means. And people are not in the habit of doing such things in cities, unless for some special reason."

"O well," said Mr. Crescent, in a crestfallen manner, "I suppose we men don't know much about such things. And I am a blundering old fellow anyway, so pay no attention whatever to my requests, Miss Gladys."

"O, Mr. Crescent," exclaimed Gladys, smitten again with sudden remorse, "of course, if you really wish it—I would do anything to oblige you."



And artful Mr. Crescent was well satisfied with the effect of his speech.

"It is only this, Miss Gladys. They are in deep sorrow, almost strangers in this city, coming here about the time of your arrival, I think, or shortly after. There are two young girls in the family, and it occurred to me—but of course it is not necessary that you should call. It was a mere suggestion on the spur of the moment—I hardly know how it came into my head to mention it. However there is no harm done, I trust."

"No, indeed, Mr. Crescent. It was foolish of me to speak as I did. But what is the trouble, if I may ask the question?"

"It is a sad story, Miss Gladys. Almost immediately after their arrival the father in a fit of despondency, caused, it is said, by his wife's reproaches for his losses in business, committed suicide."

He stopped short in dismay as Gladys uttered a gasping sound and turned deathly pale. But she said not a word, and after an instant's pause Mr. Crescent, attributing her emotion to her kind-heartedness, continued speaking.

"And, by the way, Miss Gladys, it is singular how very closely their name resembles your own. Theirs is Grayson—simply the difference of a letter. Miss Gladys! my dear Miss Gladys! What *can* be the matter?"

For Gladys was gazing at him with an expression of countenance which filled him with astonishment. Now pale, now flushed, now bewildered, now joyful—what wonder if he were almost beside himself with amaze-

ment? Finally, a look of determination chased away all other expressions.

"Mr. Crescent," she said, tremulously, in her excitement laying her hand on his arm, "Will you, O, will you be so very good as to stay in the store until Edna returns, and allow me to go out for a little while? Please, please do."

"Certainly, I shall do so if it is any—any convenience to you, Miss Gladys. But possibly—it might be best—not on my account, of course—but perhaps it might be better that you should wait until Miss Edna or Miss Eudora—"

"O, no; I cannot wait, Mr. Crescent. I really must go at once. Please stay here until my return, even if they do come. I want to tell you something."

She was hastily putting on her hat, which hung on a nail near her, and was gone without waiting for another word.

Mr. Crescent shook his head as the door closed behind her, and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief—an action peculiar to him in moments of perplexity.

"Very singular!" he said, half aloud. "Very, very singular! I hope she is not taking a fever, or anything. I am afraid I did wrong to let her go off alone that way. Dear! dear! I seem to have the unhappy faculty of rousing her in a miserable manner! If I only had the right—she certainly needs some one to look after her. I wonder—"

But what he wondered there is no telling, for at that moment Edna returned. She was, of course, much surprised on finding the change of clerks. As

the gentleman could give no clear explanation as to the cause of Gladys' absence, and as his manner was odd and flurried, Edna began to be seriously alarmed, and to fear that something had happened to this dearly beloved sister.

"What did she say she went for, Mr. Crescent? Was she sick, or what? Do tell me, please, and don't hide anything from me. I am sure there is something the matter."

"My dear Miss Edna, I know no more than you do. We were sitting conversing, when she suddenly jumped up, put on her hat, and begged me to keep store while she went out for a time. I must own she looked excited and anxious, but not ill—at least, she did not look like herself."

"But what were you talking about, Mr. Crescent? Was it of anything that might have troubled her?"

"Nothing, I assure you, Miss Edna. I was only telling her the case of an unfortunate family living near here. No, our conversation could have had nothing to say to it. I am also concerned, Miss Edna, and earnestly hope and pray that she will soon be back."

And then, with a sinking heart, Edna remembered how strange at times Gladys had been of late—how eccentric, even, in her sudden changes of mood, her restless nights, her queerness altogether. What if she really had no trouble—if it had been in her mind alone—all a figment of her diseased imagination?

As these ideas flashed over Edna, she suddenly looked at Mr. Crescent, and as their eyes met, each recognized as by magic the other's thought—Gladys

had lost her reason! Edna burst into a violent fit of weeping.

"O, Mr. Crescent! Do go and look for her! She may do something dreadful! O, please go quickly!"

"I will, my dear Miss Edna! I shall go at once—I know the direction she took, but—she has been gone for half an hour—I fear—however, we must hope for the best."

And he hastened off, full of perplexity and distress.



## CHAPTER XXV.

Edna had retreated to the adjoining room, leaving the door into the store open between, and was still crying, when Eudora returned.

"Why, Edna, what is the matter? Are you sick, or what is it?"

And then between her sobs, the story was told.

For a moment Eudora looked startled, even shocked; then she recovered herself and said quietly, "I certainly think you are mistaken, dear. Gladys has known what she was about all along. I have never seen anything about her that might lead one to suppose she was not perfectly in her right mind, however her imagination may have magnified the trouble which no doubt in some form or other really fell upon her. No, indeed. Be very sure that at any rate up to this time, she has known perfectly what she was about."

And then Eudora betook herself to her never-failing refuge, prayer, while Edna now joined her with all her heart.

Five minutes thereafter, the store door opened.

"Here is our truant!" called a manly voice in which a ring of happiness was clearly discernible, and Gladys came hastily in to her sisters, with a countenance from which all traces of sorrow seemed to have passed away forever. She closed the door, leaving Mr. Crescent, at his own suggestion, to keep store. Then she kissed Eudora and Edna with a

warmth and effusiveness beyond anything either of them had ever witnessed in her before.

"Girls," she said, in a trembling and yet exulting voice, "you will suffer no more from my gloom and misery! My sorrow is all over—gone, never to return! It was a mistake—my own mistake—but I will tell you all about it!"

With what absorbing interest did Eudora and Edna listen to the story.

"That day you left me at home," she began, "to finish the work and prepare the luncheon, I was getting some hot water out of the bath-room to wash the dishes in, when I heard Mrs. Smith speaking to some one in the adjoining room—the transom in both rooms must have been open. I was waiting for the water to become hot enough, when I caught our own name, and then Mrs. Smith said, 'Poor man! they say he was so unhappy in his own family that he could bear it no longer, and he shot himself.'"

Gladys' voice trembled from the remembrance of the wave of misery which then and there had overwhelmed her, and beneath which her happiness, as she verily believed, had sunk forever.

"O, girls, it was awful! I remembered how often I had been cold to father, and I felt absolutely certain that my apparent want of affection had been making him wretched all those years, and that at last he could endure it no longer! O, dear girls, you never can conceive the misery which day and night thereafter haunted me perpetually, so that, at almost any moment, death would have been welcome as the only chance of escape from life-long torture!"

Eudora and Edna were both crying; but though the tears were in Gladys' eyes, the absolute radiance of her countenance was beyond anything they had ever witnessed there before.

"It was a mistake, girls! The name was Grayson—only the difference of a letter. What wonder that I never thought of doubting! You remember how anxious I was to leave that place and to come here at once. It seemed as if I could not breathe there any more, and that I must get away as quickly as possible, somewhere, anywhere, only out of sight of the place where such fearful news had come to me."

Then Gladys explained about Mr. Crescent coming in that afternoon, and in the course of conversation accidentally—is anything ever mere accident?—mentioning that family and the sad circumstances; also the similarity of name. And how suddenly it had flashed across her that it was of their father Mrs. Smith had spoken, and not of hers. But she was determined to have her hopes confirmed beyond the possibility of a mistake, and had instantly gone to Mrs. Smith, who had taken all doubt away.

"And O, girls! I never can tell you what the blessed relief is! Nothing now can ever make me unhappy again, I verily believe. I thank God with my whole heart, and will never cease thanking Him for His goodness."

"Dear Gladys," said Eudora, wiping away her joyful tears, "we, too, are very happy and most thankful."

"But, O Gladys," said Edna, "why didn't you tell us? It might have been cleared up long ago. For,

of course, Mr. Crescent would have known; he was with father when he died. I wonder you didn't speak to him about it."

"Over and over I was on the point of doing so—of asking him some question regarding it—but each time I shrank from hearing the dreadful particulars, fearing his answers would only add to my torture, however he might try to evade the truth. But we must not leave him any longer in the store. I want to thank him for what he has done for me to-day."

Then she kissed her sisters again.

"Thank you both so much for all your patient goodness to me. It has not been thrown away, ungrateful as I must have appeared at times."

Entering the store, she went straight over to Mr. Crescent, who had risen to receive her, and held out both her hands impulsively.

"How can I ever thank you, dear friend, for bringing me such happiness! If it had not been for what you said to-day I might never have known the truth—"

She paused abruptly, for something in his manner startled her back into the dignity from which joyous excitement had deprived her for the moment. She was about to withdraw her hands, but he held them fast.

"How can you thank me, my dear Miss Gladys? Very easily. Just leave these little hands altogether in my keeping, and give me the right henceforward to see to it that no sorrow can come to you unshared by me. And all that love can do to avert such sorrow



and multiply your joys shall be done by me, as God shall give me life and strength to do it."

And this time Gladys did not turn away!

That night she told it all to Eudora.

"It is only what I have long been expecting, dear Gladys," said her sister, after loving congratulations.

"And I am very, very glad."

"And he is not so old, either," said Gladys. "And he looks ever so much younger than his age."

"Yes, indeed," replied Eudora, "I never think of him as being old at all."

"But, Eudora, I want to tell you, that now I see it is all true—what you have constantly said. Even this dreadful trouble has been all for the best. Everything that I used to fret over before—our poverty, our position in various ways, even the loss of our dear father, now seem so light in comparison with what I thought was the dreadful reality. Then, I don't think I shall ever be proud, as I once was. That awful remembrance will be a check upon me while life lasts. So that I can now truly say with you, everything has been for the best, and I am heartily thankful for it all! Then there is one other thing I want to say to you. Of course, I have always said my prayers, and since this trouble, I have many times asked the Lord to help me. But I see now that they were only half-hearted prayers. I did not really believe that any relief could possibly come to me. But this afternoon, just before Mr. Crescent came in, the pain was terrible—it seemed to be pressing out my very life—I felt I could no longer bear it. Suddenly, it flashed across me that there *must* be help in God for helpless sufferers, and I verily

believe for the first time in my life, I threw my whole heart into a cry for that help to come to me."

For all answer, Eudora opened her little Bible and read for their nightly portion the words which have borne the thanksgivings of millions of happy hearts as on wings to Heaven:

"I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. . . . O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together. I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. . . . Gracious is the Lord and righteous: yea, our God is merciful. . . . Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. . . . O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever."

Two mornings after, as Edna opened the store, she noticed a small parcel on the counter. Taking it up, she read on the back, "The missing money. All things come to him who knows how to wait."

She opened the package in a great state of excitement. There was the sum of sixty-seven dollars—the exact amount of what she had lost. Rushing into the kitchen where her sisters were busy, "What do you suppose I have found?" she blurted out, holding the parcel behind her back. "Guess quickly, girls—do guess quickly." Then, as they hesitated, she could no longer contain herself.

"The money! Every cent of the sixty-seven dollars! Lying this way on the counter! Here it is all come

back to me! Just as I had become content to give it up, and to be quite happy without it!"

When Mr. Crescent came that evening, and Edna eagerly questioned him regarding the recovered treasure, she could get no satisfaction from him.

"Be content with the fact that the money is yours again, my dear child. Curiosity is said to be an attribute of woman, but she is much better without it. And now I have something of importance to tell you. I am acquainted with one of the bankers of this city. Yesterday he told me that their lady stenographer was shortly to be married, and that they would be glad to supply her place with any one I would recommend to them. So begin at once on your lessons in stenography, Miss Edna. I have ascertained that with ordinary ability and close study one can master the art in about three months. That will be the time when the present stenographer leaves, and I think I may safely give your name as applicant for the position."

Edna had been looking delighted while Mr. Crescent was speaking; now a shade of soberness passed over her countenance.

"But what will become of the store in the mornings, Mr. Crescent? For if I am to be ready so soon, I must give my whole attention to it."

"It has occurred to me," said Mr. Crescent, "that it would be an act of charity, as well as a convenience to you, if you should employ one of the young ladies whose name so closely resembles your own, to act as your clerk in the store. She might thus be learning the business; and possibly, eventually, if you should

be successful in the bank, she might buy you out, and become the proprietor of this grand establishment! Of course, in that case, the mother and sister would also come here to live."

"And where should we go?" asked Edna, in surprise. She had not yet been informed of the new arrangement.

"Well," replied Mr. Crescent, with one of his funny looks, "I think a change of residence will be in order about that time, and I shall take it upon myself to see that none of you suffer by the change."

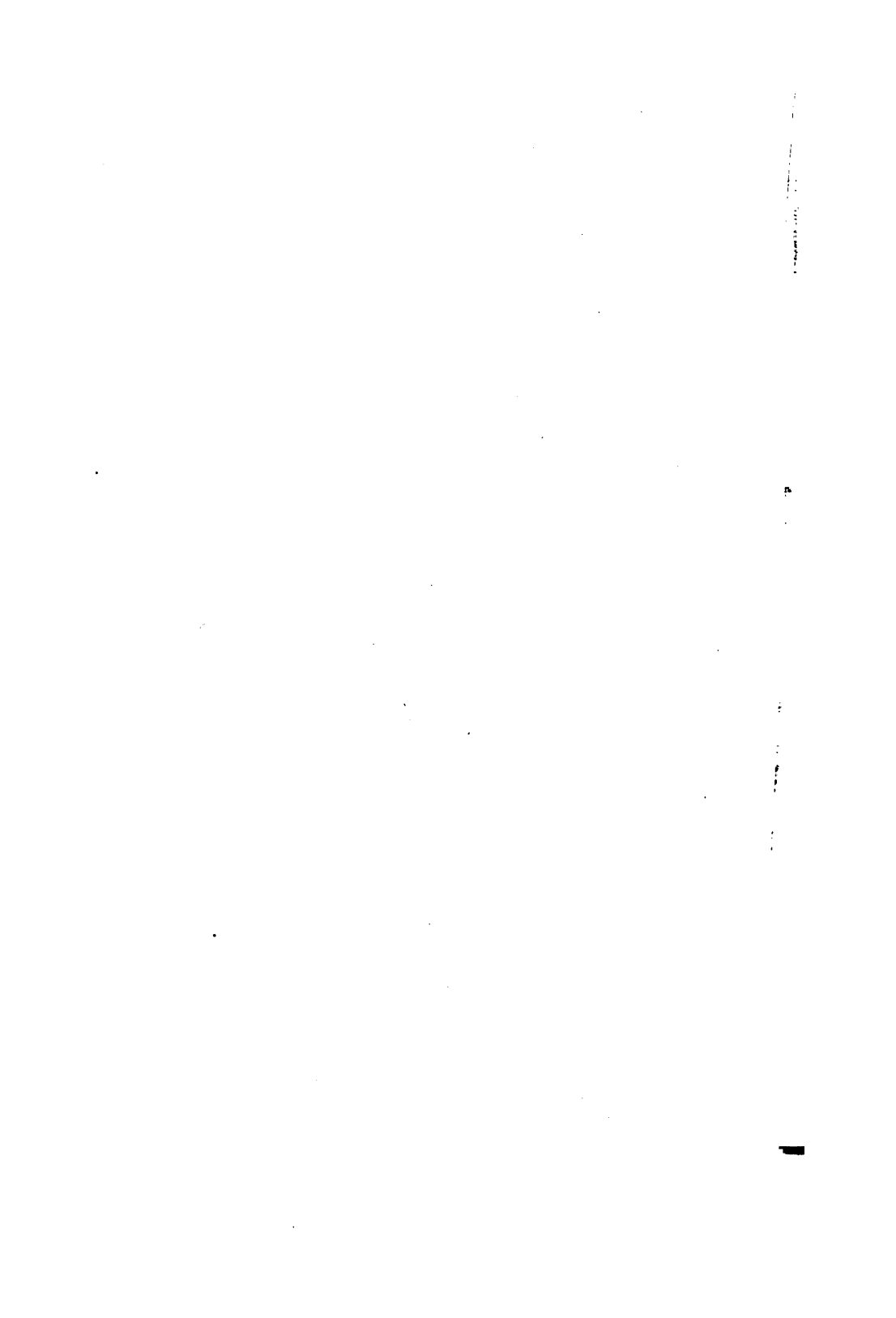
Here for the present the story ends.

But a chorus of voices is asking: Did Mr. Ernest come back when the three months were over? He did. And was Eudora—no more questions, dear readers. This is not a strictly so-called love story, and if you insist on further particulars, you can follow Edna's example and draw upon your own imagination to any extent desired.

But be very sure that, whatever in after life befell Eudora, it was the very best befalling that could possibly be hers. And may we not believe that, when her work here below was over, she would in that Higher Sphere resume and finish the song so loved on earth—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever."

THE END.













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